The Galter Health Sciences Library is pleased to present:

"And there's the humor of it": Shakespeare and the four humors

An exhibition developed and produced by the Exhibition Program at the National Library of Medicine and the Folger Shakespeare Library

November 24 – January 2
in the Galter Health Sciences Library Atrium, first floor

These four bodily humors—blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm—were understood by Shakespeare, and generations before him, to define people's physical and mental health, and to determine individual's personality, as well. See this exhibition to learn more about the language of the four humors and their influence in Shakespeare's plays.

"And there's the humor of it": Shakespeare and the four humors explores the role played by the four humors in several of Shakespeare’s most beloved plays through beautiful imagery and rare books from both the National Library of Medicine and the Folger Shakespeare Library, and examines more modern interpretations of the four humors in contemporary medicine.

In conjunction with the exhibit, the Galter Library has also put together a book display highlighting materials from our Special Collections that were published in the era during which Shakespeare lived and worked. The Special Collections Reading Room is open by appointment to all scholars who wish to use the Library's historical materials. Please contact us in advance if you wish to use the collection.

Visit the exhibition on the web at:

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Curated by Gail Kern Paster, Ph.D. and Theodore Brown, Ph.D.