

OBJECTS USED TO PERFECT PENICILLIN AS ANTIBIOTIC LOANED TO MUSEUM VICTORIA IN AUSTRALIA

WASHINGTON – The National Museum of Health and Medicine has loaned two objects that figure prominently in the perfection of penicillin as an everyday antibiotic -- a culture flask and a mounted specimen of penicillin – to Museum Victoria for display in its Melbourne Museum in Carlton, Australia.

The objects were borrowed from the Washington, D.C. museum's more than 12,000 historical medical objects and are now on display in the Melbourne Museum's Mind and Body Gallery in an exhibit titled, "Medical Melbourne," which focuses on the people and human drama behind biomedical advances and breakthroughs.

Melbourne Museum is one of four museums operated by Museum Victoria of Melbourne, Australia, which was established in 1854 and holds a collection of national and international significance and provides extensive outreach and Internet services. For information, call (+ 61 3) 8341 7777 or visit <http://melbourne.museum.vic.gov.au/>.

"We have a number of items in our collection that tell the story of early penicillin research," said Alan Hawk, manager of the historical collections at the National Museum of Health and Medicine. "We were quite pleased to be able to contribute to this fascinating exhibit so far from here."

The penicillin specimen on loan is a seven-day growth cultured by Alexander Fleming at St. Mary's Hospital in Paddington, England. It was Fleming who in 1928 was culturing some bacteria when outside mold spores landed on one of his petri dishes and when he noticed that bacteria did not grow near the mold he named it "penicillium

notatum.” The specimen on loan to Museum Victoria was presented to the National Museum of Health and Medicine by Col. Arthur de R. Barondes of the U.S. Army Medical Corps, who assisted with clinical research on penicillin during World War II.

Australian-born Howard W. Florey, a pathologist at Oxford University who in 1940 developed a practical means of purifying penicillin and turning it into the first antibiotic, made the penicillin culture flask on loan from a biscuit tin. Pharmaceutical companies in the United States and Britain were able to commercially produce penicillin about a year after Florey proved it was possible to mass-produce the drug. He shared a Nobel Prize in 1945 with an Oxford colleague for their work on penicillin and in 1965 was named a baron. Florey died in 1968 at age 69.

The historical collection at The National Museum of Health and Medicine documents changes in medical technology since the early 17th century and includes objects ranging in size from a suture needle to a two-ton MRI magnet, such as X-ray equipment, microscopes, surgical instruments, numismatics, and anatomical models. The collection is made available for the education of medical professionals, Department of Defense personnel, historians, and the public through exhibits in the museum, loans to other institutions, and individualized study.

The National Museum of Health and Medicine, founded as the Army Medical Museum in 1862 to study and improve medical conditions during the American Civil War, is an element of the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology. Open daily except Dec. 25 from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., the museum is located at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, 6900 Georgia Ave. and Elder Street, NW, Washington, D.C. Public telephone

number is 202-782-2200 and the web site is www.natmedmuse.afip.org. Admission and parking are free.

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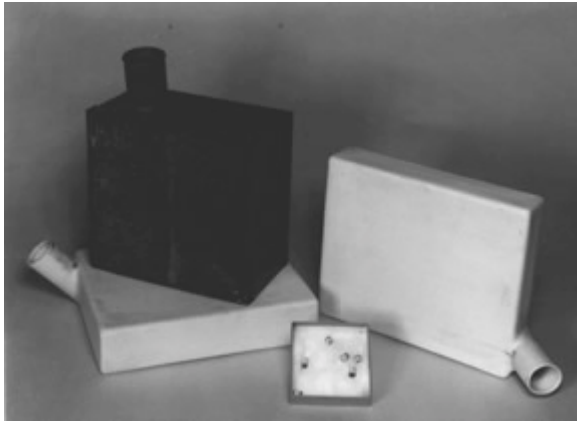


PHOTO CAPTION:

The National Museum of Health and Medicine has loaned a penicillin culture flask that figures prominently in the perfection of penicillin as an everyday antibiotic to Museum Victoria for display in its Melbourne Museum in Carlton, Australia.