1840

1842

Under the Sino-British Treaty of Nanking, the United Kingdom agrees not to interfere with local Chinese traditions, including the use of Chinese herbs and medicines for healing ailments.

A herbalist presiding over his stall in the late Qing period.

1844

Hong Kong's Chinese population reaches nearly 20,000.

1852

The Nam Pak Hongs 南北行 [firms selling goods from North and South] gradually take shape. As a strategic center for local Chinese merchandisers, the association handles the import and export of sundry goods. The industry of Chinese medicine springs from the Nam Pak Hongs based on Wyndham Street.

1860

1861

More than seventy foreign firms set up in Hong Kong.

1872

The Tung Wah hospital 東華醫院 is founded, providing basic medical services to the disadvantaged. Diagnoses are carried out entirely by Chinese medical practitioners, who bestow free medicine and treatment.

The main entrance to the Tung Wah hospital.

1880

Physicians trained in Western medicine are already practicing in Hong Kong. They include Macau-born Portuguese doctors and other practitioners from the Malay Peninsula and Indonesia, serving mainly Western patients.

1884

The Medical Registration Ordinance 醫籍登記條例 is enacted, setting standards for physicians trained in Western medicine; however, it imposes no restrictions on Chinese medicine.

1885

The first local Chinese medicine shop, Shing Chai Tong 誠濟堂, sets up a branch at 180 Queen's Road Central. Its main store is located on Wende East Road in Guangzhou.

1887

The Hong Kong College of Medicine 香港西醫書院, which later becomes a part of the University of Hong Kong, is founded in 1887. Sun Yat Sen majors in Western medicine there.

1894

An outbreak of bubonic plague sweeps Hong Kong, and the Kau U Fong 九如坊 and Tai Ping Shan 太平山地區 areas are the worst hit. Nearly 2,500 people die. Over the following decade, there are further outbreaks of the plague, claiming a total of 13,000 lives. Since Hong Kong Governor Sir William Robinson does not recognize the status of Chinese practitioners, the latter have no right to sign death certificates.

Chinese residents undergo quarantine for diagnosis and treatment during an outbreak of bubonic plague.

1896

The Tung Wah hospital introduces Western medical services. In the same year Wong Lo Kat 王老吉 sets up its first branch behind Man Mo temple on Chik Street.

1900

1904

Western physicians are unable to halt the spread of smallpox. The Chinese gentry request laws to be established permitting the freedom to choose between Chinese and Western treatment at home. Chinese doctors begin to take a prominent role in society as medical healers.

1911

The Republic of China 中華民國 is established.

1912

The University of Hong Kong 香港大學 is founded in 1911 and in 1912 is combined with a medical college for training doctors in Western medicine.

Sun Yat Sen (second from left) majors in Western medicine at the Hong Kong College of Medicine, founded in 1887, which later becomes the University of Hong Kong.

1917

A night school is set up to hold classes to train Chinese practitioners.

1918

A resolution is adopted to allow home treatment of smallpox. It is later revoked.

1920

1924

Chinese practitioners from Guangzhou create a school in Hong Kong to train local practitioners.

1926

The first local medical group, the Chinese Pharmaceutical Merchants Association 中醫藥商會, is established and unites the import and export businesses of agencies and medical firms. The group boasts more than three hundred members.

1930

The earliest local journal on Chinese medicine is published by the Chinese Medical Society 中華國醫學會: *Chinese Medical Journal* 國醫雜誌.

Cover of publication commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the Hong Kong Medicine Dealers Guild.

1935

Lee Yiu Cheung 李耀祥 proposes the compilation of Yim Fong Jap 驗方集, a collection of empirical prescriptions.

1938

An outbreak of smallpox kills nearly 2,000 people. The government provides free vaccinations against the disease.

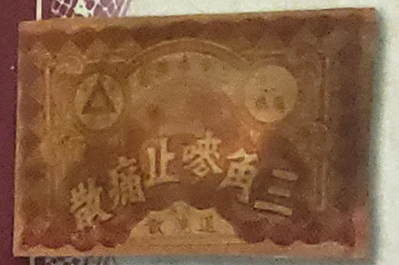
1938

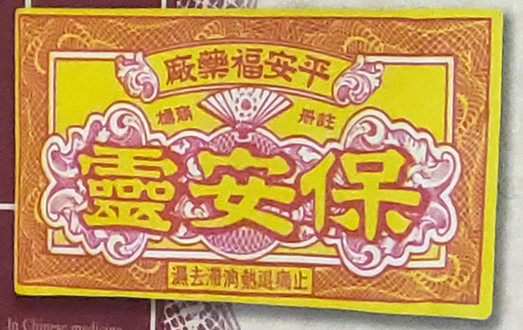
The Hong Kong Medicine Dealers Guild 香港藥行商會 is established to promote not only unity among those in the trade but also active participation in various relief efforts and social welfare projects. An attached unit of physicians trained in Western medicine provides free diagnoses.

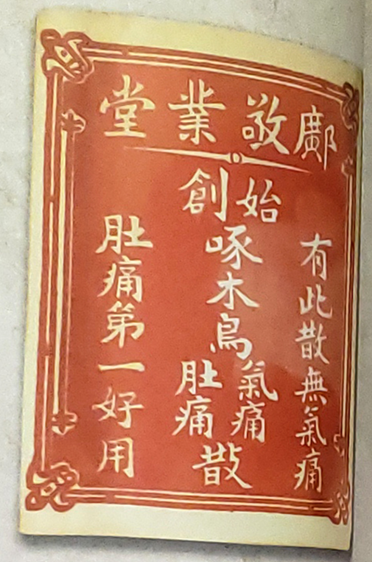
1939

Guangzhou falls under Japanese occupation, and numerous refugees flee to Hong Kong. Appalling sanitary conditions encourage the rapid growth of infectious diseases. More than four thousand people are killed by pulmonary tuberculosis. The Guangdong Chinese Medical School 廣東中醫藥學社 relocates to Hong Kong. The spread of cholera kills several hundred people.

Opium smoking, which peaked in the nineteenth century, resulted in the rapid physical deterioration of addicts.



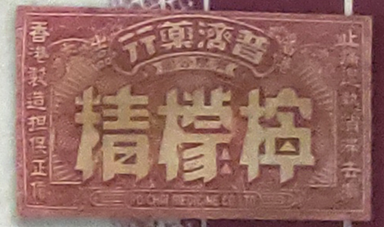




In Chinese medicine, powder is sometimes called *choy* 菜 [vegetable] or *chung* 精 [essence], but this is a marketing ploy devised by medicine factories to sell what is, in fact, just powder.

The *yan seun* 研船 [milling boat], or *yeuk seun* 藥船 [medicine preparation boat], is a grinding tool commonly used in Chinese medicine shops. In rowing movements, the wheellike pestle is pushed pack and forth in the boat-shaped vessel, propelled either by hand or foot. The strenuous effort and the time required to produce even a small portion of powder led the milling boat to be gradually replaced by machinery. However, the wooden utensil is still kept in traditional Chinese medicine shops for small-scale production.

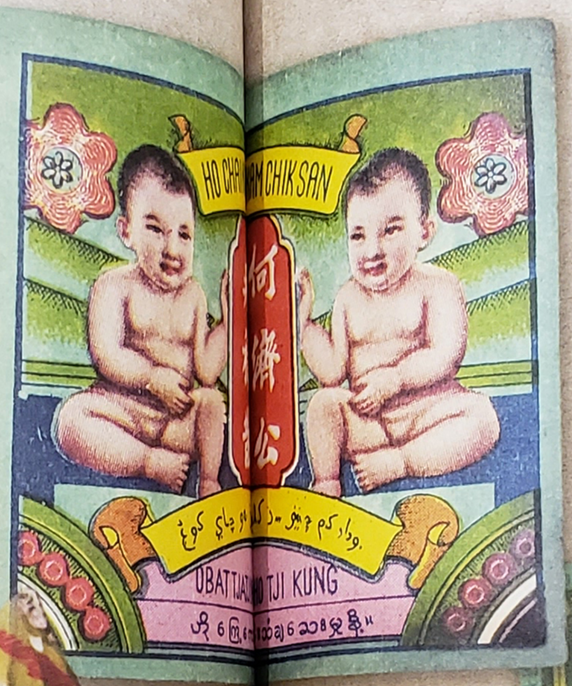
Powdered medicine provides the most effective relief from common discomforts such as indigestion, vomiting, and diarrhea. Different forms of drugs, however, play different roles, according to the patient's needs.



Because powders and pills had a bitter taste and were unmistakably medicinal, children usually refused to take them; so manufacturers created sugarcoated, brightly colored tablets with a more appealing appearance.

From then on it became common practice among parents to trick their children into taking medicine by telling them it was candy. Thus primed, the children didn't need persuading, and they took the pills unquestioningly.

The chemist A. S. Watson broke new ground in pediatric medicine over a century ago with his inimitable Worm Cakes 疳積花塔餅 [herbal candies], made in the attractive form of iced-sugar gems. Once introduced, they quickly gained popularity and became a best-selling children's medicine.



A strikingly designed packet often invited poor imitations from counterfeiters. Take Grand and Cheerful Partridge Powder, for example (see below). Ever since the packaging bearing the iconic twin-baby motif was launched in the early 1930s, other children's remedies with similarly designed cases soon crowded the market. Wang Hing's packaging, however, was a classic design with a feel for symmetry and balance. The twin-baby logo harked back to one of the most enduring concepts in Chinese culture, namely, that "happiness comes in pairs."