Conium maculatum, Hemlock, Cicuta, Conio

Beck's translation (2005) of Dioscorides (70 AD*) Materia Medica*: Deadly (antidote is rough wine), sap dried and applied topically is good for shingles, erysipelas, stops nocturnal seminal emissions, relaxes genitalia, dries up milk, keep young breasts small, and make boys testicles wither.

Not in *Tacuinum Sanitatis* (circa 1300)

*Physicians of Myddfai* (c. 1300) – no entry

*Macer Floridus de Viribus herbarum* (c. 1300 – translation by G. Frisk, 1949) p. 133, follows Dioscorides – poisonous. Applied topically is good for Erysipelas, for the eyes, for keeping young breasts small, as an anti-aphrodisiac, and for skin inflammations.

Cordus, Valerius (1546) *Dispensatorium* – no entry

William Turner (1551) *A New Herball* uses as noted by Dioscorides.

Fuchs (1551) *De Historia Stirpium* uses as noted by Dioscorides

*Pharmacopoeia Augustana* (1564) – an ingredient in Unguentum Jovis for inflammation, hot swellings and scrotal inflammation; and in Oleum Mandragorae with mandragora; hyoscyamus, papaver somniferum, opium and violets – for treating inflammation, for inducing sleep, sedating headaches, mania, fevers, and more.

Gerard, J (Johnson edition 1633) *The Herball.* Notes that it is very poisonous ‘therefore not to be applied outwardly, much lesse taken inwardly into the body’.

Culpeper (1649) *A Physical Directory* – Poisonous. Topically for priapism, shingles, erysipelas, ulcers and gout.

Quincy (1718) *Dispensatory* – Poisonous, lots of fatalities, no mention of asthma.

James, R. (1752) *Pharmacopoeia Universalis* used externally for hardness of liver and spleen; with milk for piles; with crushed snails, for inflammations of the testicles, for gout, sciatica. For scirrhous tumours.

Linnaeus (1782) *Materia Medica* p. 87-88. Narcotic, diuretic, for suppuration, scars, scrofula, carcinoma, ulcers, Scabies, gonorrhoea, Leucorrhoea, Atecnia

Duncan, Andrew (1819) *The Edinburgh New Dispensatory*  ‘a virulent poison’ (with lurid descriptions of mode of death) ‘recommended by some in chincough [= whooping cough] and various other diseases.’

Paris, J.A. *Pharmacologia* (1831) Dr John Davy notes that mixed with Henbane it is ‘palliative for cough and pulmonary irritation.’ ‘A valuable sedative’ also in measles and pneumonia.

Garrod, AB (1834). *The Essentials of Materia Medica and Therapeutics*  notes that the vapour of heated conine (from hemlock, *Conium maculatum*) has been used to relieve cough including whooping cough (pertussis) and that its chief effect is on paralysis of voluntary muscles, similar to curare, and causes death by asphyxia. Further information given on the effects of methyl conine

Lindley, John (1838) *Flora Medica* ‘a powerful narcotico-acrid plant, occasioning stupor, delirium, palsy and asphyxia ... death in the most dreadful convulsions’. Recommended for cancer, scrophula, syphilis, dropsy, epilepsy, as an anodyne etc. ‘Stated by Aretaeus to be anti-aphrodisiac, by Stoerck and Bergius to be the reverse’.

Bentley (1861) *Manual of Botany* Poisonous. Used for relaxing spasm (no mention of asthma).

Barton, BH and Castle T. (1877), *The British Flora Medica* ‘occasionally prescribed on account of its sedative action on the motor nerves’ – otherwise several accounts of mode of death by ingestion.

Fluckiger and Hanbury (1879) *Pharmacographia* – describes it but gives no uses.

Remington, J. (1894) *Practice of Pharmacy – “*used as an antispasmodic”

Martindale (1936) *Extra Pharmacopoeia* one sees the following: “Conium and conine hydrobromide [these are chemicals from *Conium maculatum*] act as direct sedatives to the respiratory centre; in poisonous doses death is caused by asphyxia. Employed with advantage in all spasmodic affections especially for whooping cough and asthma; in neuralgia, epilepsy and as a sedative in acute mania”

Martindale (1964) *Extra Pharmacopoeia* quoting the British Pharmaceutical codex for 1936 ‘**It has been used** in chorea, mania, paralysis agitans, and spasmodic affections, such as whooping cough and asthma. It is very poisonous.’

*British Pharmacopoeia* (2014) – no entry.