

O leczniczym użyciu grzybów w XIX wieku

On the medicinal uses of fungi in the 19th century

SUMMARY

In the 19th century, the rural population of central Slavic lands, including areas which were ethnically Polish, used fungi not only as food, but also as medicines. It was believed that fungi had a special power that could be either curative or noxious for people. Fungi were mainly used in external treatment, especially for treating wounds and ulcers. However, the role of fungi was much wider than just that: some (*Fungus cervinus*) were used to increase the sexual drive in household animals, while others (*Russula emetica*, *Gyromitra infula*) served to drive away evil spirits.

Fungi also became recognized as remedies by official medicine. In the first half of the 19th century, a number of species were used as medicines. The fungi mentioned most frequently in Polish pharmacopaeias and pharmaceutical handbooks of the period include *Agaricus albus*, used as a laxative and antisudorific, and *Fomes fomentarius*, which was used, after special preparation, for making dressings. In the second half of the 19th century, however, it was ergot, *Secale cornutum*, that gained a special position among fungi used in therapy; ergot was used in preventing haemorrhage and in stimulating uterine contractions during labour.

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