



Folk Medicine in Southern Appalachia

Anthony Cavender

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In the first comprehensive exploration of the history and practice of folk medicine in the Appalachian region, Anthony Cavender melds folklore, medical anthropology, and Appalachian history and draws extensively on oral histories and archival sources from the nineteenth century to the present. He provides a complete tour of ailments and folk treatments organized by body systems, as well as information on medicinal plants, patent medicines, and magico-religious beliefs and practices. He investigates folk healers and their methods, profiling three living practitioners: an herbalist, a faith healer, and a Native American healer. The book also includes an appendix of botanicals and a glossary of folk medical terms.

Demonstrating the ongoing interplay between mainstream scientific medicine and folk medicine, Cavender challenges the conventional view of southern Appalachia as an exceptional region isolated from outside contact. His thorough and accessible study reveals how Appalachian folk medicine encompasses such diverse and important influences as European and Native American culture and America's changing medical and health-care environment. In doing so, he offers a compelling representation of the cultural history of the region as seen through its health practices.

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