

Ten weird and terrifying medical instruments from the past

January 22 2014, by Mark Lorch

The UK's largest medical charity, the Wellcome Trust, has made its vast database of images [freely available to all](#). The collection holds photos of hundreds of years worth of medicine, instruments and scientific culture.

For me, the progress of science best described by advances in medicine and the instruments used to practice it. Here is a list of a few of my favourites.

Nothing quite says medicine like a syringe. And this collection has plenty, from the 17th century brass or [18th century](#) ivory enema syringes, to the 20th century's glass and stainless steel ones, all clearly made to last much longer than our modern disposable versions.

17th century French brass syringe



Credit: Science Museum, London

18th century Sri Lankan Ivory enema syringe



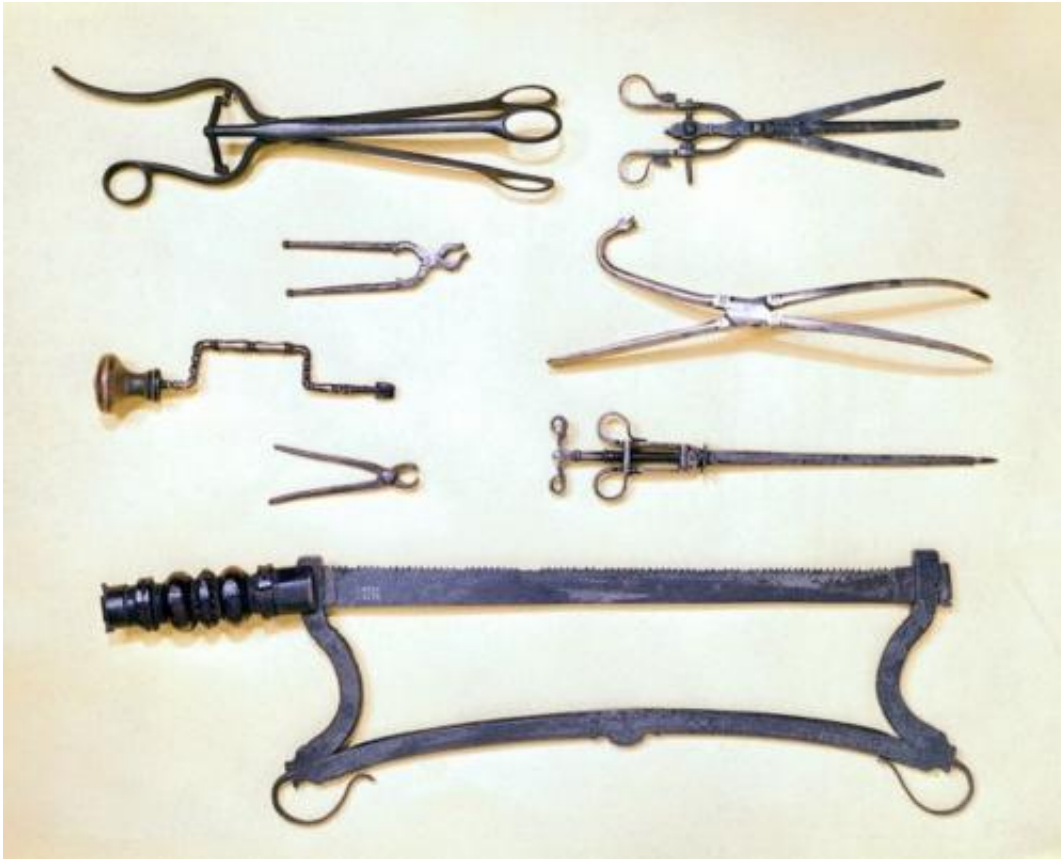
Credit: Science Museum, London

19th century Japanese self-administering enema syringe with a piston and reservoir



Credit: Science Museum, London

Then there are the [surgical instruments](#), like the 16th century tools below. Those on the right include a double-bladed knife, **a forceps for extracting arrow head** and **a bullet extractor**.



Credit: Wellcome Library, London

Others like the **Belgian Iron "scolds bridle" mask** from the 1550s that was used to publicly humiliate and punish, mainly women, speaking out against authority, nagging, brawling with neighbours, blaspheming or lying, are just horrible inventions.



Credit: Wellcome Library, London

More preferable are the "**Jedi**" helmets from the 1980s, used in conjunction with MRI scanners to investigate the brain without having to crack open the cranium. The word "Jedi" was used to ensure that children put it on without too much fuss.



Credit: Science Museum, London

There is also this steampunk **steel hand and forearm with brass wrist mountings** from 1890.



Credit: Wellcome Library, London

And finally how about the slightly **disturbing model eye...**



Credit: Wellcome Library, London

...to go alongside the original eye pad



Credit: Wellcome Library, London

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