

# Going Viral: Spreading the News

While many doctors encouraged inoculation, some officials banned it. Not everyone followed the law, and not everyone had the right to choose if they did or did not want inoculation. Planters often made the choice for the enslaved, either risking inoculation or risking exposure. Not all planters felt they could afford weeks of missed labor by quarantining their slaves.

The enslaved often relied on their own medicines, and the poor could not miss weeks of work for the inoculation process. Others could not afford the procedure, using home remedies or the do-it-yourself options printed in the newspaper.

During the 1760 smallpox outbreak, editor Peter Timothy published that it was safe to visit Charles Town, and assured people that he would let them know if it became dangerous. He also assured people they could not get sick from handling the newspaper.

## Inoculation

## Quarantine

Women advertised their nursing services in the newspaper since the quarantine process after inoculation could last six to eight weeks.

Inoculation caused a minor form of the illness as to acquire immunity. The person remained contagious and often still died.

In 1732, the SC Gazette printed how to do home smallpox inoculations by running a needle and thread through infected pustules, then through the skin of a healthy individual.

If caught, the law fined colonists 100 pounds for inoculating themselves or family, and three months in prison for inoculating slaves.

Eliza Lucas Pinckney inoculated her slaves. Ann Manigault inoculated her entire family.

The threat of an attack on Charles Town remained real and government officials did not like having large portions of the population sick by choice.

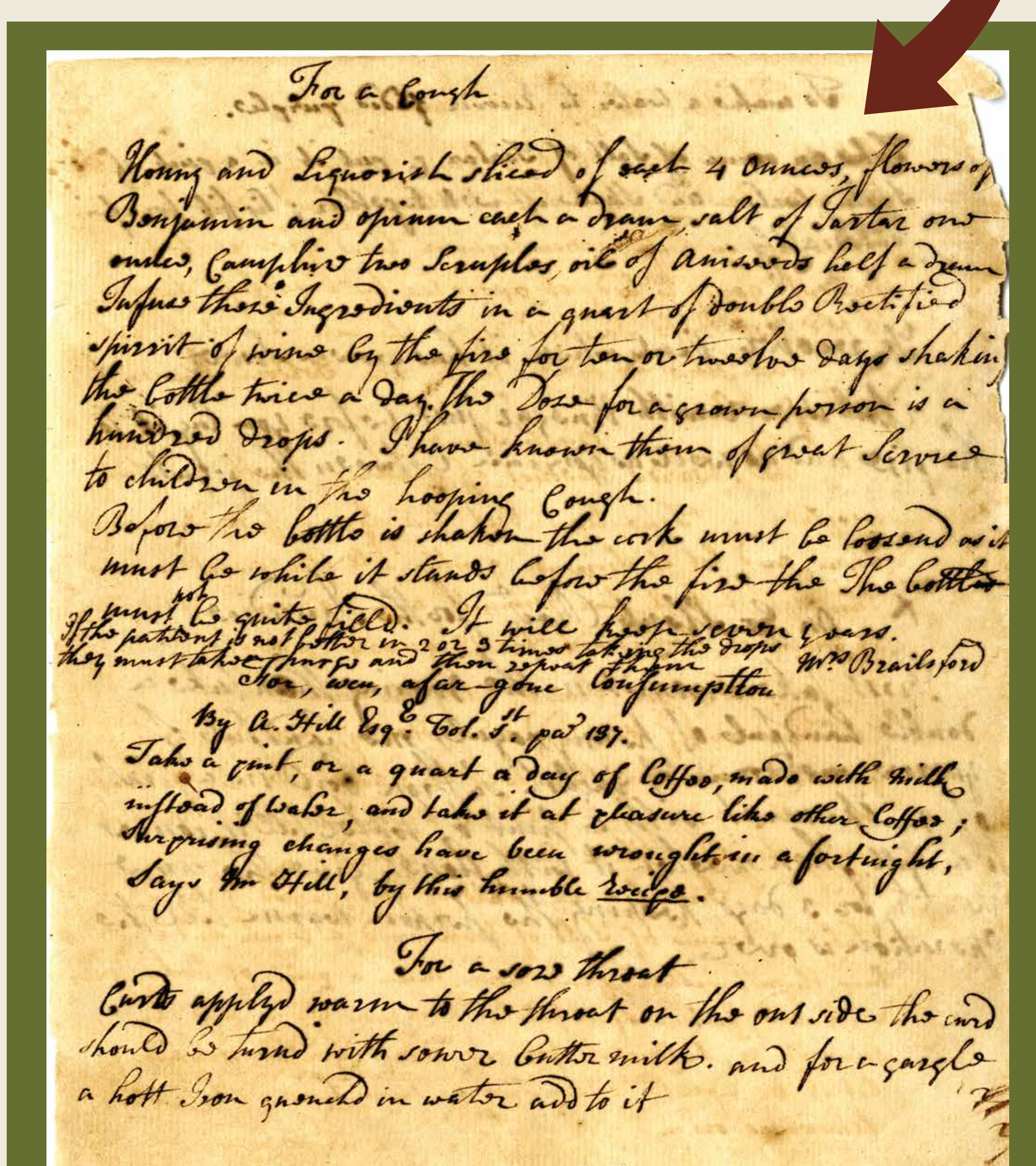
Smallpox inoculation provided colonists with a 2% risk of dying versus up to a 30% chance by acquiring the disease naturally.

Newspapers reported the number of sick and dead from outbreaks. Churches posted the congregation's statistics. These numbers hurt morale, and the government did not like that inoculation deaths added to already high numbers.

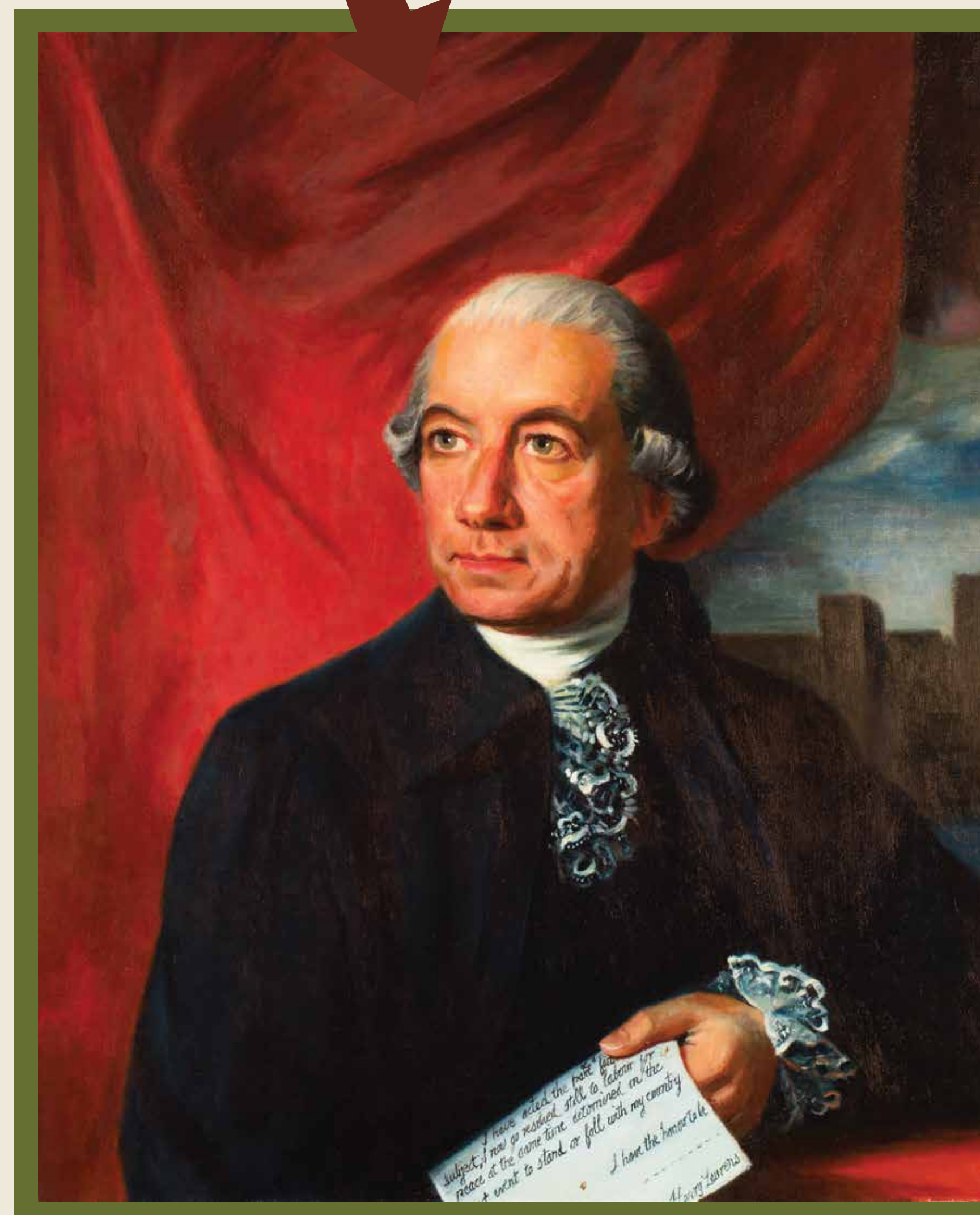
Civilizations have inoculated their people for almost 2,000 years.

People trusted home remedies over science.

Quarantine measures continued to prove the safest method to contain the spread of viruses.



Eliza Lucas Pinckney's receipt book has home remedies for fever, cough, and consumption. South Carolina Historical Society



In 1760, Henry Laurens served on the state health board and advocated for a ban on smallpox inoculations. He argued for guarded houses of the ill, and chose to quarantine 250 of his slaves on a ship in the Charles Town Harbor.

Ironically, his daughter Martha later married Dr. David Ramsay who introduced the smallpox vaccine to Charleston in 1802, and eliminated the virus from the city in less than twenty years.

South Carolina Historical Society



Who would you listen to?