

Adapting with Science: Inoculation & Vaccination

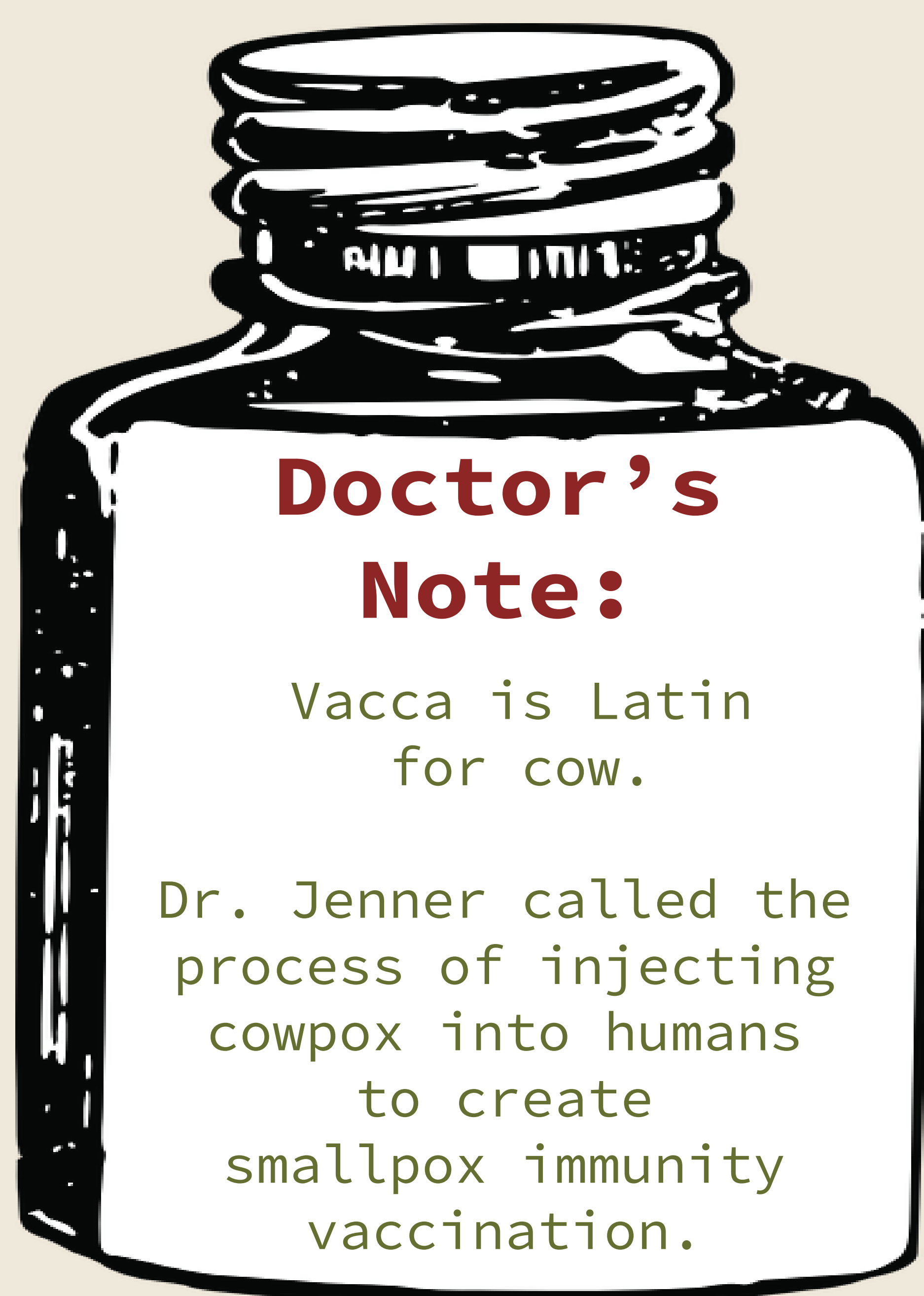
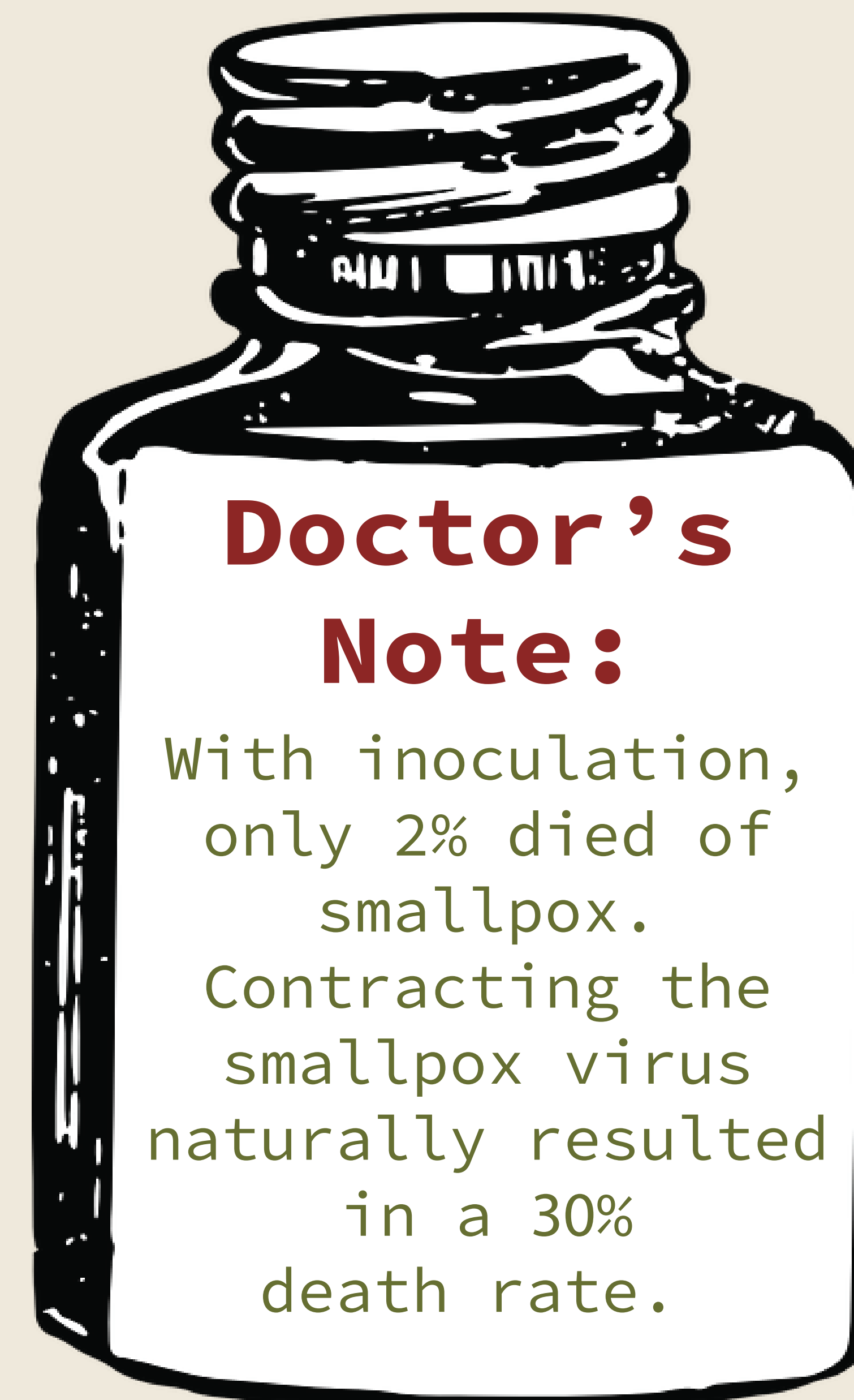
For thousands of years, people suffered through smallpox. They understood little of the actual science, but they studied the virus' behavior and the people who survived versus those who died. Inoculation meant taking the dead virus from a sick person and putting it inside a healthy person, hoping that their body would create a resistance to exposure to the live virus. The Chinese practiced inoculations as early as 1000 AD, and India, Africa, and the Ottoman Empire soon joined the fight.

1721

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu learned of inoculation while living with her diplomat husband and family in the Ottoman Empire. Having suffered smallpox herself, and lost family members to the virus, she chose to inoculate her young daughter even at the risk of scarring the girl or even death.

Lady Montagu's decision proved successful and she convinced European royalty to inoculate themselves and spread the news.



Dr. Edward Jenner

1796

Folklore suggested that milkmaids did not succumb to smallpox. Dr. Jenner looked into the story, and discovered that exposure to cowpox created an immunity to its cousin smallpox.

Jenner experimented by inserting cowpox into people, then exposing them to smallpox. The procedure worked repeatedly, and he called it vaccination.

Vaccination proved safer than inoculation because people did not have to endure a minor form of the illness to acquire immunity.

1802

Dr. David Ramsay

Dr. David Ramsay, a well known Charleston physician and politician, introduced the idea of vaccination to the city. Like Lady Montagu, Dr. Ramsay demonstrated his belief in science by vaccinating his son for the city to see as proof.

After witnessing the success of vaccinations, and seeing the practice of it spread throughout the U.S., Charleston made vaccinations mandatory. By 1816, smallpox, the disease that had scarred and killed for centuries, had disappeared from the city.

Dr. David Ramsay, having smallpox as a child and suffering blindness in one eye as a result, advocated for a citywide mandatory smallpox vaccine.

A History of Medicine in South Carolina, 1670-1825
Joseph Ioor Waring, MD

For 350 years, South Carolina has endured virus outbreaks, quarantines, and divisions about the best medical advice. However, through it all, South Carolina thrived to become the vibrant state it is today.