

2016 Annual Scientific Meeting
FIT Open Mic Session

Presenter: Vanessa Mazandi, MD

PRESENTATION INFORMATION

Title: Of Deaths Put on by Cunning and Forced Cause: A Review of the Toxin, Pathophysiology and Theories Surrounding the Death of the King in Shakespeare's Hamlet

Abstract: My presentation explores the language and poison cited by the King's ghost in Shakespeare's Hamlet when he describes to his son the manner in which he was murdered. The questions my presentation seeks to address are 1) Could henbane be used to commit murder, 2) Could henbane have caused the changes in the human body that the King's ghost describes when he is exposed to henbane, 3) Are there other poisons that could have killed the King in the way the ghost describes and 4) Was Shakespeare deliberate in his reference of henbane and the manner in which Hamlet's father, the King, died? I attempt to answer these questions through interpretation of the Ghost's soliloquy in Act I of the play and through reading the work of scholars and scientists who have debated the interpretation of how Hamlet's evil uncle Claudius managed to kill Hamlet's father.

Objective 1:

Discuss toxicology within the context of Shakespeare's, Hamlet

Objective 2:

Give a description and history of henbane

Objective 3:

Convince the audience that Shakespeare's references weren't used just for their lyrical quality but were carefully chosen based on his knowledge of medicine and poison