Profile of Medicines from Nara

Nara's history with medicine goes back to ancient times. The *Nihon Shoki (The Chronicles of Japan)* says that in the year 611, Empress Suiko held a "kusuri-gari", or an event to collect medicinal ingredients, in present-day Uda. [Empress Suiko's "Kusuri-gari"]

Temples used to be deeply involved with medicine. Shosoin, the treasure house of Todaiji Temple, still has stocks of medicine from those times. [Shosoin of Todaiji Temple]
Some temples had their own exclusively made medicines, and gave them to the sick.

Gods of Medicine

As medicine was so important for people's health, it was often related to gods in myths.

Omiwa Shrine in Nara, allegedly Japan's oldest shrine, also reveres Sukunahikona-no-kami along with Onamuchi-no-kami, both of which are beneath the shrine's main deity Omononushi-no-okami.
The "Hana Shizume" Festival, a ceremony for preventing spring disasters and diseases, and praying for people's wellbeing, is held at Omiwa Shrine every year on April 18th.

Omiwa Shrine (Courtesy of Omiwa Shrine)

Empress Suiko's "Kusuri-gari"

The *Nihon Shoki (The Chronicles of Japan)* says that in the year 611, Empress Suiko held a "Kusuri-gari" (literally means "medicine hunting") event in what is now the Uda district of Nara. A great deal of evidence shows that the Imperial Court was heavily involved with medicine. For example, wooden slips unearthed at the site of the Fujiwara Palace (694-710) in Nara mention 25 kinds of medicine and natural remedies, such as ginseng and other plants.

**Mural showing "kusuri-gari" event
(Owned by Hoshi University)**

Shosoin of Todaiji Temple

Among the treasures kept at Shosoin, there are 60 kinds of medicine preserved in 21 lacquered containers. They were not just preserved as treasures, but were kept for later use in accord with the people's needs. They were actually given to sick people, and the amount used for such purposes was later replenished accordingly.

**Todaiji Shosoin (Courtesy of Shosoin
Office, The Imperial Household Agency)**