

## **Reasons to Accept or Decline a Pharmaceuticals Donation**

Collections Care for Historical Pharmaceutical Collections Resource Package  
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### **Reasons to Accept**

Most Importantly: The Institution Has The Capacity To Store And Care For The Object In Question

- Space is available
- The object is safe to handle OR training and equipment is available to minimize any risks

Object Is In Good Condition OR Institution Has The Capacity And Interest To Improve Its Condition

Matches Mandate

Unique

OR

In Better Condition And/Or With Better History Than The Duplicate Already In The Collection

OR

A Spare Would Be Useful

Some items are very popular – they feature often in exhibits, in programming, and are frequently requested by other museums. In such cases, keeping duplicates in the collection may be warranted.

Strong Provenance

## Reasons Not To Accept

### Doesn't Match Mandate

Every museum should have a mandate, a guiding principle that decides what objects are collected and preserved. Pharmaceutical bottles can be an interesting addition to a collection, but may not always align with the museum's broader mission.

Pharmaceuticals should not be collected purely for the cool factor, but should be considered carefully according to the stories the museum wants to tell.

### Insufficiently Unique

Collections storage space is finite. A pharmaceutical, like all items, may fit the mandate but may be identical to or very similar to an item already in the museum's collection.

Uniqueness becomes an extra important factor if the museum does not focus on medicine and/or if the museum has limited storage space. It is also especially relevant if the offered item is in poorer condition than the one already in the museum's collection.

### Too Much Risk

Sealed pharmaceuticals, even those with potentially dangerous contents, are fairly safe to hold in a museum collection. However, the risk is not zero. Containers can degrade over time and even a very stable bottle can be dropped and broken.

Reasons to judge a donation too risky include:

Poor hazardous materials disposal access (e.g. a museum on a university campus might have a whole department trained in handling hazardous materials onsite, while a small community museum in a rural hamlet may be reliant on a busy police or fire department).

Storage not secure and/or not environmentally controlled – harder to guarantee safety and integrity of pharmaceuticals

Untrained collections workers – museum may rely on large or rotating group of volunteers or student workers, who are less familiar with safe handling practices.

### Poor Provenance

Little is known about the object or how it was used.

### Too Difficult To Care For

The object is in poor condition and repairs would be prohibitively expensive, or the object requires specific care or storage conditions that the institution can't fulfill.

#### Better Suited to Another Institution

Objects may be in good condition and have strong provenance, but might equally or better suit another institution. This can be true even if it matches the mandate when another institution currently has more capacity to handle it

E.g. The Museum of Health Care was offered a prototype wheelchair which would have been a valid addition to the collection. However, the offer was passed on to another museum, which was equally well-matched to receive the donation and had more capacity.

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