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Hanaoka Style: A Blend of East and West That's Off the Hook



Seishu Hanaoka (1760 to 1835), a prominent Japanese physician, famously demonstrated his ingenuity when treating a boy with an errant fishhook (*lower right*) lodged in his throat. Unlike his medical peers, Hanaoka avoided tugging on the fishline dangling from the patient's mouth. Instead, by stringing abacus beads onto the line, Hanaoka created a beaded rod to advance the hook and dislodge it from traumatized tissue. Most contemporary Japanese physicians practiced traditional medicine, *kanpo*, which used herbs to treat disharmony. So-called "Hanaoka Style" blended *kanpo* with *rangaku*, or Western medicine, which emphasized the assessment of organs to discern the cause of illness. As in the fishhook incident, the brilliant Hanaoka always taught his students to individualize patient therapy to alleviate suffering. In 1804, he would administer the world's first recorded general anesthetic by mixing the plants monkshood and moonflower to make *Mafutsusan*. In this herbal preparation, aconitine from monkshood potentiated the sedative effect of moonflower, an anticholinergic. Once again, Seishu Hanaoka reimagined existing medical knowledge with his signature style. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists' Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology.)

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