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ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS

Antique Chinese Diagnostic Dolls



For centuries, traditional Chinese physicians observed the *Nei Ching* by conducting “pulse diagnosis” on superficial and then deep pulsations at three discrete locations along the course of first the right and then the left radial pulses of their female patients. However, by the 1700s until as recently as the 1950s, Chinese social conventions were discouraging such cross-gender contact between strangers. So to preserve their modesty, aristocratic ladies — or their maid servants — would localize symptoms by pointing to corresponding sites on ivory figurines (such as the copies above, courtesy of the Wood Library-Museum). Such diagnostic dolls were typically naked except for shoes and often earrings, bracelets, or flower bouquets. When not in use, most statuettes reclined upon mahogany beds. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists, Inc. This image appears in color in the *Anesthesiology Reflections* online collection available at www.anesthesiology.org.)

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