

# Ancient doctor—expert in venomous bites—found buried in Egypt

January 7 2025, by Irene Wright

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A tomb recently unearthed in Egypt shows that medicine and magic were once equally revered, and expertise in both earned a long-dead physician to the pharaohs a place of honor among the ancient world's most

esteemed.

While ancient Egypt is well known for its architectural marvels, the society also made great strides in the field of medicine, and the oldest known document mentioning doctors comes from Egypt. The pharaoh had fallen ill, and documents that survived to the present day said a [physician](#) cured the ailment of his nostrils.

The ancient Egyptians would go on to change the world of medicine over their nearly 3,000-year history, including learning about the cardiovascular system, providing treatment for dementia and depression and the early days of dentistry.

Now, archaeologists working at the famed Saqqara cemetery have discovered the final resting place of a royal doctor—both physician and magician.

Saqqara, located in the ancient city of Memphis, acts as an "open-air museum" because of the rich history on its soil, according to the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities. Kings from the first ever dynasty can be found here, as well as the Apis Bull that served as the physical incarnation of the god Ptah.

"A joint French-Swiss archaeological mission has uncovered the mastaba tomb of a royal physician named 'Teti Neb Fu' in the southern part of Saqqara, dating back to the Old Kingdom during the reign of King Pepi II," the ministry announced in a Jan. 6 Facebook post.

Pepi II became king at an early age during the sixth dynasty of ancient Egypt, between 2305 and 2118 B.C., according to Britannica, making the tomb somewhere around 4,000 years old.

The tomb shows evidence of ancient looters, relatively common, but the

walls not only remain intact, but are also beautifully decorated.

"The tomb is adorned with stunning carvings and vibrant artwork, including a beautifully painted false door and scenes of funerary offerings," officials said.

The sarcophagus found inside the tomb was also inscribed with the name of its occupant and his titles, according to the post. Because of the burial location in Saqqara, researchers knew he was important, but Teti Neb Fu's official titles named him as the chief palace physician.

Teti Neb Fu was also called a priest and the "magician" of the goddess Serket, known as the goddess of venomous creatures, suggesting he was an expert in treating venomous bites or stings, officials said.

He was also given the title of "chief dentist and director of medicinal plants" on his sarcophagus, according to the post.

Excavations in this area of Saqarra began in 2022, to unearth the graves of state employees for King Pepi who are buried near him and his wives, officials said.

Saqarra is about 25 miles southwest of Cairo, Egypt.

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