

EDITORIAL

THE NECESSITY OF THE RECOGNITION OF THE INVALUABLE HISTORY OF ISLAMIC MEDICINE FOR SUCCESSFUL FUTURE PLANNING

MOHAMMAD FARHADI*, M.D.

From the Department of Otolaryngology, Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran.

The 15th Century After Hijra (A.H.), the 21st century A.D., has been entitled "the Revival of Islam". The Islamic countries, one after another, are being possessed with a tendency and inclination towards divine Islamic rules.

Some of the important events of this era are as follows:

1- The victory of the magnificent Islamic Revolution in Iran and the formation of the Islamic Republic under the leadership of Imam Khomeini in February 1979.

2- The formation of the Islamic Republic in Pakistan.

3- The fall of Jafar Numeiri's government and the formation of an Islamic Republic in Sudan.

4- The victory of the Muslims in the Algerian election.

5- Movements towards Islamic rules in Afghanistan, the Republics of the former USSR, etc.

These changes in the political systems, which are caused by the volition of the Islamic nations, made the specialty associations of medical sciences ready to accept the progressive and inspiring culture of Islam.

In order to have changes in medical concepts, the existing problems in the Islamic World should be recognized first and then seek the remedies from the invaluable culture.

Specifications of the medical societies in the Islamic countries are as follows:

1- A wide gap between the scientific level of the developed countries and that of the Islamic countries. After centuries of scientific superiority of the Islamic societies over the scientific world, western countries

made progress after the renaissance and they imposed their cultural and scientific domination over the Islamic countries by way of: A) books, journals and databanks, B) designing and making instruments, C) production and distribution of drugs, D) teaching specialists in the field of medical sciences, and E) formation of specialty associations.

2- Lack of self-confidence in the physicians and those practicing affiliated professions in the Islamic countries, so that they pay less attention to the scientists from their own countries than those of developed countries.

3- The influence and leadership of the culture of the western countries on the medical systems.

4- Lack of specialty organizations and associations, exclusively formed for the Islamic countries.

5- Underestimating their invaluable background.

The History of Medicine Before the Rise of Islam

There has been much dispute over the question of the origin of medicine, so that investigation into the subject produces little or no results. What is obvious is that the history of medicine is among the oldest of the different branches of the history of nations and it is not an exaggeration to say that the history of medicine and the history of mankind were born at the same time and during various epochs of history, certain nations have been outstanding in the field.

There weren't many scientific medical centers in the Arabian Peninsula, while Islam was arising. There were only the following four main medical centers which were widely active throughout the world:

The Scientific Center of Alexandria

As we know, this center commenced working after the death of Alexander and the settlement of Ptolemy

* Chairman of the International Congress of the History of Medicine in Islam and Iran, and the Chairman of Medical Journal of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

and it did remarkable services to medicine, anatomy and pharmacy until the sixth and seventh centuries A.D. The language of the center was Greek and medical scholars like Heraphilus (born about 335 B.C.) were working there.

Heraphilus, who executed Ptolemy's commands, performed examinations and medical experiments on the condemned, and perhaps he was the first physician who explained the anatomy of the brain by the use of a systematic method and paid careful attention to the circulatory and nervous systems and expressed views about cirrhosis and ascites. Another physician of these centers was Erasistratus who believed in diets, sports, abstinence and bathing more than drugs. Distoridomen was also working at this center and has edited a book, including five chapters, on pharmacology. One of the most eminent and luminaries of this school was Galen who had an effective role in establishing a scientific reputation for this school.

The Scientific Center of Al-Sham (Damasus) and Mesopotamia

This centre was active for years after the rise of Islam, and the (ancient) Syrians played an important role in translating the medical books and works from Greek directly to Arabic or first to Syriac and then to Arabic.

The Medical Center of India

Medicine has an ancient history in India. There are two books, one on surgery and the other on medicine, among the religious books of Hindus, in which surgical operations on hand, nose and grafts and different diseases of eyes attract our attention. Some of the scientists at this center were involved in translating books from Indian to Arabic.

Jondi-Shapoor School

The School or University of Jondi Shapoor had reached the acme of its scientific splendour concurrent with the birth of our Dignified Prophet, Muhammad (PBUH). In that university, the Greek science was combined with the Oriental science. There was a hospital at the university in which many medical students were trained and educated. An example of these physicians is the family of Bokhtishoe who were the most prominent for over six generations (more than 250 years).

Ibn-Masuyeh, Serjis, and others who were practicing medicine, played momentous roles in translating medical books and conveying the medical sciences to the Muslims and the Islamic territories.

The Evolution of Medical Sciences in Islam

In order to come to know the position of science in the Arabian Peninsula, it should be noted that the

number of the individuals who were able to read and write was sparse and consequently their information about medicine was scanty; under these circumstances the sublime instructions of Islam on medicine and health which have been described in the Holy Qur'an and the sayings of Muhammad (PBUH) and the Infallible Imams were combined with the Greek, Iranian (Persian), Indian, and other countries' medicine, and the outcome was called the Islamic Medicine.

This combination accompanied with numerous translations to Arabic, including *Settah-Eshre* of Galen, and *Al-Hashaish-Al-Sumum* by adept translators like Esshaq-Ibn-Honein and Hareth-Ibn-Kaldeh played important roles in that field.

Although compiling of books by the Muslim scientists in that era is less often observed, the science of compiling was brought into existence and by making use of experiments, some books like *Al-Havi*, *Zakhire Kharazmshahi* were edited. Islamic scientists showed great diligence; consequently the medical sciences, in which a lot of subdivisions came into existence, were expanded. Many subdivisions were related to the kinds of therapy like surgical operations, cauterization, orthopedics; sometimes to the procedures of therapy like *Asshab-Al-Qiass* and *Asshab-Al-Tajarib*; and sometimes to the different human beings given medical treatment, such as women, the aged and children. In addition, treatises about different diseases were compiled. All of these writings ruled over the whole field of medicine, and educational centres like Beyt-Al-Hikmah and hospitals like Azodi, Ray, and Moqtadery in which the sick were taught and cured, were founded. Famous physicians and pharmacists like Razi, Hatef, Biroony, Avicenna, and tens of other scientists were trained in these centers.

SOME FACTORS AFFECTING MUSLIM ADVANCEMENT IN MEDICAL SCIENCES

1- The Position of Medicine in Islam

A- Much importance is attached to medical science in Islam. It is regarded as a noble science, of the same grade as Elm-ol Adian (religious sciences).

B- Islam is in harmony with human nature and the environment in which he/she lives; therefore it is ordered to ponder over the holy verses of the Qur'an. Several steps have been mentioned for this kind of pondering.

The Dignified Prophet of Islam stated, "There is/are (a) remedy/ies for every disease". Stating these words, our prophet inspired physicians to ponder on the diseases.

2- The Position of the Physicians

A physician, among other people, is so esteemed in



Islam that he/she is entitled «mohia», which is one of the divine noble names. It means that a physician is reviver—a person who restores health to people and consequently revivifies the society.

When the Dignified Prophet of Islam was informed of the death of a Jew, he felt his death deeply; people said, "But he was a Jew" and Muhammad (PBUH) stated, "Have you not been told that he was a physician?"

3- No Certain Group or Class Could Monopolize Science

All of the people, regardless of their race, class, family, language, culture, wealth, power and considering only piety and virtue, could take advantage of the whole opportunities. This is one of the most important factors that enhanced the progress of Islam in different aspects, e.g. medical sciences, because the monopoly of medical education among the aristocrats and the governmental authorities had been obliterated and the whole people could equally and with regard to their ability and talent enjoy the fruits of (learning) sciences. Many a physician, who were among low-class (low social-class) families, achieved top ranks in (medical) sciences. Avicenna (Ibn-Sina) and Razi are two examples.

4- There Has Been No Restriction on Acquiring Sciences from Different Countries

The behaviour of Muslims towards the vanquished nations was always benevolent and humane. Their attitude, especially towards civilization, cultures, documents and books, was respectful. In many cases, offering an invaluable book might liberate a city.

Muslims are persuaded, by our Dignified Prophet, to travel to the farthest reaches of the world (at that time, China) in order to acquire knowledge.

5- There has been no Restriction on Employing Physicians

There was no restriction on employing physicians, so that some of the non-Muslim physicians, e.g. Bokh-tishoé, were practising medicine at the court of the caliphs.

Contemplating the History of Medicine as a Pattern for the Development of Medicine in the World of Islam

No civilization, except the civilization of Islam, could preponderate over the culture and civilization of powerful nations like Greece, Byzantine (Rome), Egypt, Iran, etc and could lay the foundation of a new culture during a relatively short period of time.

Considering this invaluable background and emphasizing the point that there is less difference in the level of science between the Islamic and the developed countries nowadays (in today's world) than between

the Arabian Peninsula and the developed countries at that time, we should ponder over the factors which promoted the World of Islam to that level of science.

Examining these factors, which is very helpful, we must pay special attention to the following points:

1- Careful deliberating on the life of the scientists and scholars in the World of Islam and considering them as patterns of the second rank in the Islamic countries.

2- Persuing medical works and books, either printed or manuscript, which have been left from different eras and analysing them into the contemporary scientific language in order to be appropriate for medical specialists and students.

3- Making continuous efforts to introduce the role of Muslims in the formation of medical sciences and consequently the following suggestion is made: establishment of specialty associations for the history of medical sciences particularly for the Islamic countries and academy of medical sciences for the Islamic World.

4- Choosing the language of the Holy Qur'an (Arabic) as one of the scientific languages.

5- Each country should keep records of different aspects of its medical science history (teaching procedures, therapeutic methods, health, organizing medical services,...) and apply them in planning for future.

6- Scientific recognition of medicinal herbs as a basic source for pharmaceutical industries and therapeutic purposes and making endeavours for spreading them.

7- In order to execute the Islamic manner over the medical society by the virtue of (based on) the recommendations of the Dignified Prophet of Islam and Infallible Imams and the methods of therapy used by the famous physicians in the World of Islam and considering the greatness which the Holy Qur'an granted for the human beings, certain laws should be passed and finally similar laws and oaths should be enforced.

8- Valuable medical works should be translated into different languages and then published.

9- The life of the prominent scientists should be analyzed and their role in the improvement of science should be explained and noted.

10- In Iran after the Islamic Revolution, we should especially note the following points:

A- The biography of the physicians and those who were practicing medicine and the related fields and became a martyr to fulfil the sacred aims of revolution, should be collected and published.

B- The pioneers of the modern medical science should be honoured.

C- Medical advancements which have been carried out during the imposed war should be recorded in order

not to be forgotten.

Considering that the Islamic Culture satisfies needs of the human nature, provided that it has not been biased against, we are going to hold the International Congress of the History of Medicine in Islam and Iran, in order to fulfil these goals.

God-willing, we are going to hold the Congress concurrently with the twelfth century death commemoration of Mohammad-ibn-Zakaria Razi, renowned physician, pharmacist, chemist and philosopher of the Islamic World and Iran, in the first week of October 1992, at the University of Tehran.

The following subjects are going to be discussed:

- 1- Fundamentals of medicine in Islam and Iran in relation to modern sciences.
- 2- A review of the history of medicine, dentistry, pharmacy and other medical fields in Iran.
- 3- Biographies of the scientists in the field of medicine in Islamic and Iranian history.
- 4- Scientific and historical research of herbs having medicinal significance.
- 5- Introduction of new books and texts in the field of medical sciences.
- 6- Glance at educational and medical centers in the Islamic world.
- 7- Ethics and principles guiding various areas of medicine.

8- Evaluation of trends in medical sciences in Islamic history.

9- Assessment of the program and research procedures in folk medicine.

10- Iranian and Muslim physicians and issues of complicated illness.

11- Recommendations of Islam and Muslim scholars in health, nutrition and control of diseases, and

12- Role of Muslim physicians and scientists in the advancement of medical sciences in the western world.

The present special issue which you are reading is a compilation of the papers and articles published previously in issues of the Medical Journal of the Islamic Republic of Iran, prepared on the occasion of the First International Congress on the History of Medicine in Islam and Iran.

Finally I should offer my thanks to all persons and establishments who are contributing to the Congress, and to the esteemed editor and editorial board and the executive authorities of the Medical Journal of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who made the arrangements and provided the facilities to publish this special issue.

We hope you will enjoy reading it, and we look forward to meeting you at the Congress.

**Chairman,
Mohammad Farhadi, M.D.**