



ISSN: 0975-833X

Available online at <http://www.journalcra.com>

International Journal of Current Research
Vol. 10, Issue, 01, pp. 64285-64286, January, 2018

**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
OF CURRENT RESEARCH**

RESEARCH ARTICLE

SHORT COMMUNICATION: MEDICINE IN PORTUGAL FROM 12TH TO 16TH CENTURY

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 10th October, 2017
Received in revised form
16th November, 2017
Accepted 28th November, 2017
Published online 19th January, 2018

Key words:

Santa Cruz Monastery,
Estudo Geral, Hospital of Todos-os-Santos,
brotherhood of Nossa Senhora da
Mericórdia, University of Coimbra.

ABSTRACT

The teaching of medicine in Portugal began in Monastery of Santa Cruz in Coimbra, in the 12th century, through the teaching of members of religious orders. In the 13th century, the medical education started to be carried out in Lisbon, in Estudo Geral, until the construction of the Hospital of Todos-os-Santos in the 15th century. Almost at the same time, it was created the brotherhood of Nossa Senhora da Mericórdia. In the 16th century, the theoretical teaching (medicine) was carried out at the University of Coimbra, while practical teaching (surgery) was carried out at the Hospital of Todos-os-Santos, in Lisbon.

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Citation: Paulo Nuno Martins. 2017. "Short Communication: Medicine in Portugal from 12th to 16th century", *International Journal of Current Research*, 10(1): 64285-64286.

INTRODUCTION

The Portuguese medieval medicine has been little studied because literature on this specific subject is scanty (e.g. António (2010)). However, this period was very important for the emergence of Portuguese modern medicine. During the Medieval Ages, the teaching of medicine in Portugal followed the teachings of the Greek-Roman medicine (Hippocrates and Galen) complemented by the knowledge of Arabic medicine (Avicenna and Rasis). The most famous Portuguese physician of this time was Pedro Hispano. However, between the 12th and 16th century, due to the expulsion of Jewish medical community by the Inquisition (e.g. Alfredo (2000)) and the temporary loss of national independence temporary (1580-1640), the teaching and practice of medicine in Portugal did not always have the desired quality.

METHODS

In this short communication about the History of Medicine in Portugal from 12th to 16th century, I collected and analyzed the main scientific books and technical articles, in this area of study, that there are available in academic libraries.

I tried to make a useful synthesis addressed to the reader who intends to have an idea on this topic, maintaining the scientific rigor in my research. Thus, I selected the 14 most important items about this theme, based on the "impact factor" of the article and the "reference" books on this topic.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, I will present the results of my investigation about the History of Medicine in Portugal from 12th to 16th century, describing and discussing the most relevant facts of my research. When the foundation of the "Condado Portucalense" (1095-1139) was established, the teaching and the practice of medicine in Portugal took place in Monasteries and Convents, under the guidance of the religious orders (e.g. Maximiano (1991)). At the end of the 12th century, during the reign of D. Sancho I (1154-1211), the prior of the Monastery of Santa Cruz sent D. Mendo Dias to the University of Paris in order to study Theology and Medicine. When he returned to Portugal, he became the first scholar of Medicine in Portugal, in the Monastery of Santa Cruz, in Coimbra. Thus, this Monastery is considered the cradle of the teaching and practice of Medicine in Portugal (e.g. Augusto (1929)).

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However, during the 13th and 14th centuries, the number of physicians in Portugal were not sufficient for the existing patients and therefore, in the reign of D. Dinis (1261-1325), it was created the EstudoGeral at Lisbon, in 1288. This medical Institution was the first Portuguese College accepted by the Pope Nicholas IV (e.g. Rómulo (1996)). This University after changing several times to Coimbra, it turned out to be located in Lisbon, near Sé (Lisbon). In the reign of D. Manuel I, the space and financial conditions of the EstudoGeral was improved by this Portuguese king. The Estudo General, such as other European Universities of Medicine, conferred the licentiate's degree in Medicine (e.g. José (1997)). The organization, duration and practice of the EstudoGeral medical course was improved in the reign of D. João I (1357-1433). The bachelor's degree lasted for three years, while the licentiate's degree was awarded with another four years of study. However, until the end of the 15th century, the teaching of medicine in Portugal was based on listening of Greek-Roman and Arabic medical texts. So, in the reign of D. João II (1455-1495), the "Véspera" chair was created to complement "Prima" chair (only theory) in the teaching of medicine.

In the reign of D. Manuel I (1469-1521), the course of medicine went on to require a specialization in Art, necessary for the study and practice of Anatomy, whose jurisdiction was tested by a surgeon. During the Medieval Ages, the hospitals treated sick persons, the shelters treated pilgrims, the gafarias welcomed lepers and the groceries looked after the elderly (e.g. Amélia (2005)). In the 15th century, these institutions were extinguished and incorporated in the Hospital of Todos-os-Santos, also known as the Hospital of the poor because it received all kinds of patients. (e.g. Mário (1954)). This emblematic Hospital of Lisbon, located in "Praça da Figueira", was created by D. João II, in 1492, and was constituted by several floors (e.g. Sebastião and José (1965)): one of the floors was the wards where the physician proceeded to surgery, other floor were for recovering patients operated with several rooms for refectory and pharmacy, and another floor was for patients with incurable diseases. There was also a floor with several rooms for refectory and pharmacy.

D. João II was the king who began the construction of this emblematic Hospital, but it was D. Manuel I who carried out the necessary renovations and expansions that allowed host more patients. In fact, this hospital was conceived to receive until 250 patients, although in the 16th century it had more than 3000 patients. This building suffered two fires (1610 and 1750) and it was destroyed by the earthquake of 1755 (e.g. Germano (2013)). Along with the creation of this emblematic Hospital of Lisbon, with a treating function, another hospital was founded in 1498, called brotherhood of NossaSenhora da Mesericórdia (e.g. Manuel (2014)), with a charitable function. The first establishment of the "Mesericórdias" was installed next to Cathedral of Lisbon due to the dedication of Queen D. Leonor (1458-1525) for those depreciated by society (children, poor). During the 16th century, D. João III (1502-1557) decided to reform the teaching of Medicine in Portugal in order to raise its standards of quality. Thus, it was decided that the theoretical (medicine) was taught at the University of Coimbra, while the practical education (surgery) took place at the Hospital of Todos-os-Santos (e.g. Salvador (1997)). This separation allowed greater specialization both in theoretical lessons (now with more disciplines about medicine, some of them taught by foreign teachers), but also in practical lessons, now with an examination on surgery (e.g. João (2002)).

CONCLUSIONS

In the 12th century, the birth of the teaching of medicine in Portugal started at Santa Cruz Monastery (Coimbra). However, in the 13th century, due to the need of creating a medical course with academic rigour, it occurred the construction of Estudo General. In the 15th century, with the creation of Hospital of Todos-os-Santos, the first Hospital of reference for treating all kinds of patients in Portugal, many of the medieval confraternities were extinguished. At the same time, it was created the brotherhood of NossaSenhora da Mesericórdia with a charity function. In 16th century, there was a bipolarization in in the practice and teaching of medicine in Portugal: the theoretical lessons (medicine) were taught in the University of Coimbra, while the practical lessons (surgery) were taught in Hospital of Todos-os-Santos, in Lisbon (e.g. Armando (1996)).

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