History of Contemporary Medicine

A Brief History of the Publication of Biomedical Journals in Iran between 1901 and 1979

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Abstract

The history of the publication of biomedical journals parallels the development of modern medicine in Iran. Modern medicine was introduced to Iran in the mid-nineteenth century, particularly after the establishment of the Dar al-Fonun School in 1851. The foundation of this college of higher education was instrumental in further advancement of modern medicine together with the publication of medical textbooks, but the biomedical journals were published later i.e. at the beginning of twentieth century and the first weekly public health periodical was established in 1901. From that point onwards, especially following the inauguration of the Faculty of Medicine of Tehran in 1934, the number and diversity of biomedical journals was gradually increased and their scientific quality was also improved.

The present paper explores briefly the history of publication of 105 medical, dental, pharmaceutical, and public health journals from the early twentieth century up to the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

Keywords: Biomedical journals • Iran

Introduction

Invention of the movable type printing around the mid-fifteenth century led to the worldwide propagation of the scientific literature and the first scientific journals appeared in the seventeenth century. According to Christopher C. Booth, the journal des Scavans appeared in Paris in 1665 and at the same time, the Philosophical Transactions journal was founded in London. Then, in the second half of the eighteenth century, the first medical journals were published.

The Medical Essays and Observations was published in 1731 in Britain and later the Medical Repository founded in 1797 in USA. Afterward, other distinguished medical journals were regularly published for instance the New England Journal of Medicine was published in 1812, Lancet (1823), BMJ in 1840, and JAMA in 1883. The Chinese Medical Journal was established in China in 1887 and its publication has continued to the present time.

In Islamic countries, the first newspaper was published in Egypt in 1827 and was followed in Turkey in 1830. In comparison; the first Iranian newspaper was founded few years later in 1837 by Mirza Saleh Shirazi, a European-trained journalist. After that, in 1851, a weekly governmental periodical (Vagheae-Etefaghieh) was published in Tehran in which some medical news and public health topics were also included. For example, in the third issue of the Vagheae-Etefaghieh, a short essay was written on prevention of smallpox for public awareness. Later on, a scientific journal known as the "Scientific" (Elmi) was published in Tehran in 1914 in which some topics were devoted to public health and medical subjects such as Drinking Water and Public Hygiene (No.2, PP: 18 – 22, by Dr. Abbas Aalam al-Molk), Public Health (in several issues of the journal by Haji Doctor Mahmoud Khan), and Opium; a Major Poison (No.6, PP: 405 – 415 by Dr. Hossien Gholi Khan).

The earliest known weekly journal on public health was published in 1901 and within the next decades, the number and variety of biomedical journals steadily increased and their scientific value was gradually improved, particularly after the establishment of the Medical Faculty of Tehran in 1934 and later in other major cities.

• The early medical and public health periodicals and their founders

As mentioned earlier, the first weekly public health periodical named Hefz-o-Sehheh (The
preservation of Health) was published by the Society of Public Health (Anjoman-e Hefz-o-Sehheh) in 1901. We had no access to this journal for further evaluation of its content.

The first physician to found a medical journal was Dr. Ali Asghar Nafisi (1872 – 1949), a European-trained physician. He was later appointed as the first Iranian Minister of Health in 1920. His monthly journal *Hefz-o-Sehheh* (Figure 1) was published in 1906. However, it was not continually published and stopped after few issues. The first issue of this journal which was published in 27 pages contained the following titles: public health, medical researches, treatments, and useful prescriptions. The earliest governmental medical journal was published in 1921 by the Ministry of Health and Charitative Affairs (Vezarat-e Sehhyeh Va Omuor Kheiryyeh). In the first issue of this monthly journal, the physicians were invited to submit their papers.

Another monthly medical journal, *Neday-e-Sehhat* (the *Voice of Health*) was a medical journal founded by the Union of Physicians (Etahadieh-ye Ateba-ye Diplomeh) in 1927. The editor was Dr. Seyyed Razi Khan Tabatabee. In the first issue, the following topics were noticed:

- The establishment of the Union of Physicians (Etahadieh-ye Ateba-ye Diplomeh) and the policy of the journal
- History of medicine by Dr. Seyyed Valliolla Nasr
- Bacteriology and its importance by Dr. Rasouli
- Alcohol harms and its toxicity by Dr. Ali Khan Mostashfi
- Influenza by Dr. Fazl ad-Dowleh

In 1933, a medical journal named *Sehhat Nemay-e Iran* (Health Mirror in Iran) (Figure 2) was published. The director of this monthly journal was Dr. Mohammad-Ali Totiya. The journal was available at the Central Library of Tehran University (microfilm, number 5676) and some of the topics were: Sadism (a mental disorder), the plague, and diphtheria. At that time, one of the most fatal infectious diseases was typhus. In the fifth issue of the journal from 1934, there was a public announcement on the outbreak of typhus in Tabriz (No.5, PP: 136 – 138).

Other biomedical journals which were published prior to 1934, the year of foundation of Tehran Medical School, are shown in Table 1.

- **Publication interval**
  Of 105 biomedical journal, 45 were published monthly, 40 quarterly, 9 weekly, 1 twice per months, 1 twice a year, 2 three times per year and 1 bimonthly. The publication interval of 2 journals was irregular and for 4 periodicals it was unknown.

- **Place of the publication**
  Of 105 periodicals, 90 journals were published in Tehran. Other cities were Mashhad 4, Shiraz 3, Tabriz 3, Isfahan 3, and Ahwaz 2.

- **Date of Publication**
  The majority of the periodicals were published between 1960 and 1970 (Table 2).
A brief history of the publication of biomedical journals in Iran between 1901 and 1979

The journals were published either by the governmental institutes or universities as well as non-governmental organizations or independent physicians, pharmacists, and dentists. Of 105 journals investigated in this study, 43 were published by individual physicians, pharmacists, and dentists; 37 periodicals by medical, dentistry, pharmaceutical schools, and other governmental institutions such as the Ministry of Health (Vezarat-e Behdari, which published 8 periodicals); and 25 journals were published by non-governmental societies, associations, organizations, and other private institutions as following:

- The Society of Public Health of Iran
- The Society of Physicians of Iran
- The Society of Gynecology and Obstetrics of Iran
- The Society of the Specialists of Skin and Venereal Diseases of Iran
- The Society of Ophthalmology of Iran
- The Society of Psychiatry of Iran
- The Society of Surgery and Orthopedics of Iran
- The Society of European Graduates
- The Students' Scientific Society of Translation and Composing
- The Union of Physicians (Etahadieh Atebba Diplomeh)
- The Iranian Pharmacists Organization
- The Dentistry Association of Iran
- The National Cancer Campaign Association
- The Surgeons of Adl School Association
- Medical Association of Iran
- Deaf Welfare Organization
- Khorasan Physicians Association
- Dentists’ Syndicate of Iran (Sandikay-e Dandanpezeshkan-e Iran)
- Medical Association of Iran
- Nouriani Charity Foundation, Tehran
- Salami Psychiatric Health Center, Shiraz
- Rezaei Sanitarium, Tehran
- Isfahan Newspaper, Isfahan
- Rangin Kaman-e No Journal, Tehran

The scope of journals

Of 105 periodicals, 64 were devoted to the medicine and allied disciplines, 25 were written on public health, 10 on pharmaceutical and 6 on dentistry.

The university medical journals

1- The Persian journals of School of Medicine of Tehran University
- Nameh Mahaneh-ye Daneshkadeh-ye

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persian Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Founder</th>
<th>Interval</th>
<th>Place</th>
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<tr>
<td>Hefz-o-Sehheh</td>
<td>1901</td>
<td>Society of Public Health</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>Tehran</td>
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<td>Hefz-o-Sehheh</td>
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<td>Dr. Ali Asghar Nafisi</td>
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<td>Tehran</td>
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<td>Tebbat</td>
<td>1908</td>
<td>Mirza Ebrahim Khan</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sehhat</td>
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<td>Seyyed Hossein Khan Edalat</td>
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<td>Teb-e Mossavar</td>
<td>1916</td>
<td>Mozayyvan-ol-Soltan</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
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<td>Teb</td>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Mohammad Khan Alim-0-Doweleh</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Tehran</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1920</td>
<td>Dr. Fatah Ali Khan</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Mashhad</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sehheyeh &amp; Umour</td>
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<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Tehran</td>
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<td>Kheiryeh</td>
<td>1922</td>
<td>Mirza Ahmad Khan</td>
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<td>Tebbat</td>
<td>1923</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
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<td>Sehhat</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
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<tr>
<td>Red Sun &amp; Lion Journal</td>
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<td>Monthly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nedaye- Sehhat</td>
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<td>Dr. Seyyed Razi Sehhat</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Tehran</td>
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<td>Dava Sazi</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>Dr. Fatolla Farrahi</td>
<td>Quarterly</td>
<td>Tehran</td>
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<td>Sehheyeh Nemaye Iran</td>
<td>1933</td>
<td>Dr. Mohammad Ali Totiya</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
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* The information of this table is based on the references no. 6 and 7.

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<td>1910-20</td>
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<td>1950-60</td>
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<td>1970-9</td>
<td>18</td>
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</table>

Table 1. The early Iranian medical and public health periodicals prior to the foundation of Tehran University Medical School in 1934.

Table 2. Date of publication of 105 biomedical journals in Iran
**Pezeshki (the Monthly Letter of School of Medicine):** was the first academic medical journal in Iran.

Five years after the establishment of Tehran Medical School, in December 1939, Professor Charles Oberling (1895 – 1960), the renowned French pathologist was appointed as the Dean of Medical, Pharmacy, and Dentistry Schools. Four years later, he suggested to the Ministry of Culture's authorities to publish a medical journal; thus, in 1943 this journal was published (Figure 3). From 1943 to 1948, the director and editor of the Journal was Dr. Nosratolla Kasemi (1909 – 1995), a Professor of Internal Medicine. The second phase of journal’s activity was started in 1948, when Dr. Jahanshah-Saleh (1905 –1977), the Dean of School of Medicine assigned some of the professors of medicine, pharmacy, and dentistry as the editorial board of the Journal. In this journal, for the first time in Iran the original papers of the Iranian researchers were published.13

**-Tebb-e Omoumi Journal (General Medicine Journal):** was founded in 1961 by Dr. Ahmad Farhad the Chancellor of Tehran University and Dean of School of Medicine. Its editor was Dr. Houshang Dowlat Abadi, a Professor of Endocrinology. At that time, this journal was considered as a major source of professional reading for general physicians. The journal was published up to 1970.9,10

**-Nashrieh-e Aasab Va Rawan (The Journal of Neuropsychiatry):** was founded in 1967 by the Institute of Neuropsychiatry affiliated to the Tehran Medical School. The editor was Dr. Beh-Bakhat.10

**-Nashrieh-e Markaz-eTebbi Koodakan (the Journal of Children's Medical Center):** affiliated to Tehran Medical School was founded in 1969. The director of this journal was initially Dr. Mohammad Gharib, a French-trained pediatrician and was followed by Dr. Reza Moaazami.10

2-Other Medical Schools' journals

- **The Tabriz Medical Journal of School of Medicine of Azarabadegan University:** was established in 1957 by Dr. Torab Amin-Alashrafi.

- **The Medical Journal of Ferdowsi University of Mashhad:** was founded in 1957 and published on a quarterly basis. The director was Dr. Mancohehr Rad-Pour.

- **The Medical Journal of Isfahan University:** was founded in 1965 and the editor was Dr. Mohammad Mirdamadi.

- **The Medical Journal of Jundishapur University:** founded in 1971 by Dr. Asadolla Mojtabaee in Ahwaz.

- **The Medical Journal of National University of Iran:** founded in 1973 by Dr. Parviz Moeceli. The editor was Dr. Mehdi Homayoonfar.6–12

- **English medical journals:**

  Two remarkable medical journals were published in English. They were:

  - **Acta Medica Iranica:** the first English language medical journal in Iran was founded in 1956 by Tehran Medical School. The first editor was Dr. Seyyed Mohammad Beheshiti. It was soon indexed in international indexing system. The journal was republished with the same title after the Islamic Revolution.14

  - **The (former) Pahlavi Medical Journal:** published by Shiraz Medical School in 1970. The first editor-in-chief of the journal was Dr. Karim Vessal, a Professor of Radiology. This journal was indexed in Index Medicus. After the Islamic Revolution, the journal was republished after a short delay and its title changed to the Iranian Journal of Medical Sciences (Figure 4).

- **The Surgery journals:**

  - **Majaleh-ye Pezeshki va Jarrahi Iran (The Medical and Surgical Journal of Iran):** was founded in 1957 and it was the first journal with the name of surgery in its title. The first chief editor was Dr. Ghodratolla Movassaghi and then Dr. Abdulla Habibi. It was published for about 17 years.6–11

  - **Majaleh-ye Mahaneh Pezeshki va Jarrahi Maktab-e Adl (The Monthly Medical and Surgical Journal of Surgeons of Adl School):** was
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- The Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics was founded in 1968 by the Society of Gynecology and Obstetrics of Iran. The director was Dr. Jahanshah Saleh and the Chief-editor was Dr. Asdolla Mahdavi.6–11

- The Journal of Ophthalmology was founded in 1968 by the Society of Ophthalmology of Iran. The first director was Dr. Yahya Shams and then Dr. Mohammad-Gholi Shams.6–11

- The Quarterly Journal of Surgery and Orthopedics was founded in 1971 by the Society of Surgery and Orthopedics of Iran. The director was Dr. Mohammad Masoud and the Chief-Editor was Dr. Hormoz Zahiri. Its publication continued up to 1974.6–11

- Iranian Journal of Surgery founded in 1978. It was the second English journal which was published every 3 months by Shiraz Medical School (after the Pahlavi Medical Journal founded in 1970). Its chief editor was Dr. Kourosh Amir-Jahed, Professor of Surgery.15

- The Journals of Dentistry

Between 1901 and 1979, six journals of dentistry were published. They were as follows:

- Majalehye-e Dandanpezeshki (Journal of Dentistry): was the first scientific journal of dentistry in Iran, the official publication of the Dentists’ Syndicate of Iran (Sandikay-e Dandanpezeshkan-e Iran) which was founded in 1946 as a nongovernmental organization. Six years after its establishment, in 1951, the Iranian Dentists’ Syndicate headed by Dr. Mohsen Sayyah, published the first issue of this journal. Dr. Sayyah was a Professor of Oral Diseases of the School of Dentistry, Tehran University.16

- The Journal of Oral Pathology and Oral Surgery (Figure 5) was founded in 1965 by Dr. Moosa Baki-Hashemi.
Ismail Yazdi, Professor of Oral Pathology and Maxillofacial Surgery, Tehran Dental School.

"The Journal of Dental School of the former National University of Iran was founded in 1967. The founder was Dr. Ali-Akbar Bahraman."

• Founders and editors

Of 105, the founders or editors of 11 periodicals were women. So that women's contribution to the publication out of the periodicals was around 10% as listed below:

- Dr. Fatemeh Shafa, Shafa Health Journal (Majaleh-ye Behdashti Shafa), 1943
- Aghdas al-Molouk Eatebari (Ghaderi-Nejad), the director of the monthly Medical and Pharmaceutical Journal of Shahrir, 1945
- Fatemeh Ghavamian, the Director of quarterly periodical published by the Student's Scientific Society of Translation and Composing, 1952
- Hoorasa Shekouh, a quarterly medical and public health periodical published by the Ministry of Health, 1954
- Dr. Azarnoush Sania (Ebtelaj); a monthly journal of dentistry, 1954
- Mariam Salami, the editor of the Healthy Soul Journal (Rooh-e Salem). Salami Psychiatric Center, Shiraz, 1964
- Dr. Azizeh Vahdat, Medical Journal of Tehran Medical School.
- Ghamar Moshiri, Pyke-Shanavaee, the National Organization of Deaf Welfare, 1976
- Dr. Mahin Behbahanian, Behkoush Medical Journal, the former Health Administration of the Pahlavi Court, 1976
- Dr. Parvaneh Vosoogh, the Director of the Research Journal of Shahr-e Azad Children's Hospital, 1977

- Dr. Adeleh Ebrahimzadeh, Jundishapur Medical Journal, Ahwaz

Discussion

The first printing press in Iran was established in Tabriz in 1816 by Abbas Mirza (1789 – 1833), Crown Prince and the governor of Azarbaijan and the first medical book translated from English was printed there in 1828; a treatise known as the smallpox inoculation written by the personal physician to Abbas Mirza, Dr. Cormick in 1826. Iran became acquainted to modern medicine after the establishment of Dar al-Fonun School in 1851 by Mirza Taghi Khan Amir Kabir, the reform-minded Prime Minister of Naser ad-Din Shah of the Qajar dynasty. Prior to Dar al-Fonun, modern medical books were not available. Two renowned European medical teachers of the Dar al-Fonun were the Austrian physician, Dr Jacob Eduard Polak (1818 – 1891) and Dr. John Schlimmer (1819 – 1881) from Holland. They compiled several books on various medical subjects which were translated into Persian and printed in Iran. However, despite the publication of medical books, biomedical journals were not published until five decades later and as said before, the first weekly public health periodical in Iran was published in 1901 with a significant time gap compared to the publication of the first world medical journals such as the Medical Essays and Observations which was dates back to 1731 in Britain. The growth of scientific journals including medicine depended on multiple factors such as adequate human resources, motivations of founders, socioeconomic stability as well as governmental, and/or society supports. It seems that the continuity of publication of those biomedical journals with governmental support were more than the journals published by private institutions, probably because of financial issues. In addition, the publication of many journals in Iran was the result of the endeavors and interest of individual physicians, pharmacists and dentists as the founders or editors. However, in most cases, the publication of these journals ceased mainly because of financial problems.

In the early Persian medical journals, there was no editorial board and no peer review system. The first medical journal with editorial board was Nameh Mahaneh-ye Daneshkadeh-ye Pezeshki (the...
Faced with shortage of medical terminology, many Arabic, French and English terms were initially used in the published Persian articles, but after the establishment of the first Iranian Academy in 1935 the Persian equivalents of many foreign medical terms were proposed by the Academy experts and so, they gradually replaced the Arabic, French, and English medical terms.

The most important factor shaping the biomedical journals in Iran was the establishment of the medical, pharmaceutical, and dentistry schools in Tehran and major cities. The foundation of medical schools in Tehran (1934) was a significant landmark in the history of medical education in our country, to be followed by Tabriz (1947), Mashhad (1949), Isfahan (1950), Shiraz (1952), National (1964), and Ahwaz (1967) Medical Schools. Thus the number, diversity and quality of biomedical journals were considerably increased (Table 2). Before the foundation of Tehran Medical School, as shown in Table 1, in total 15 medical and public health periodicals, but from that point onwards, more than 90 biomedical journals, mostly as monthly or quarterly journals were published.

The contribution rate of women as the founders or editors of these periodicals was insignificant because Iranian women enrolled relatively late in the higher medical education and only after the establishment of the Tehran Medical School in 1934 was it possible for the Iranian women to study medicine.

At the beginning, most published articles were translated from foreign sources especially French and English periodicals, but after the foundation of the medical, pharmaceutical and dental faculties in Tehran and other major cities, local research was performed and published. For instance, the first and second issues of the journal of the Tehran Medical School in 1938, contained a study of histopathologic examination of 200 patients with Leishmania written by Dr. Mostafa Habibi-Golpayegani, the professor of pathology at Tehran medical School.

Overall, the majority of the journals were published in Persian. Two influential medical English journals, Acta Medica Iranica (founded in 1956 by Tehran Medical School) and the Pahlavi Medical Journal (published by Shiraz Medical School established in 1970) were indexed in Index Medicus, the international medical indexing system of the time. So, at present, 166 papers of Acta Medica Iranica and 116 articles of the former Pahlavi Medical Journal are available on PubMed indexing system. As the result of international indexing, some of the interesting published papers in the former Pahlavi Medical Journal were cited in the world medical literature.

The evaluation of the biomedical journals published after the Islamic Revolution of 1979 needs further study.

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