

History of Contemporary Medicine in Iran

The First Medical Journal of Tehran University

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Abstract

The School of Medicine of Tehran University was officially established in 1934. Then, in December 1939, Professor Charles Oberling (1895 – 1960), the famous French pathologist was appointed as the Dean of Medical, Pharmacy, and Dentistry Schools and a new era of medical education was ushered in. He suggested to the Ministry of Culture's authorities to publish a medical journal; subsequently, the first Persian academic medical journal in Iran was founded and published in 1943. Herein, we present a brief account of this medical journal's foundation as well as biographies of its founders and editorial board.

The cornerstone of the first modern university in Tehran was laid in 1934. Five years later, in December 1939, Professor Charles Oberling (1895 – 1960), the famous French pathologist was appointed as the Dean of Medical, Pharmacy, and Dentistry Schools.¹ At that time, Tehran Schools of Medicine, Pharmacy, and Dentistry had 40 departments (Korsi in Persian) including 28 in medicine, eight in pharmacy, and four in dentistry. Departments were managed by Europe-trained Iranian physicians — mainly by those who were graduated from France. The total number of the scientific staff of Tehran Schools of Medicine, Pharmacy, and Dentistry was around 200. They were ranked as professors, associate professors, heads of departments and clinical supervisors. There were five official teaching hospitals including Sina, Razi, Nesvan (later Amir-Aalam), Farabi, and Rouzbeh Hospitals. Two other hospitals namely, Goharshad-e Hesabi and Vaziri were also used for teaching purposes. Dr. Oberling

proposed to the Ministry of Culture's authorities to publish a medical journal in Persian. Then, the Minister of Culture, Dr. Ali-Akbar Siasi (1894 – 1990) in February 1943, assigned Tehran Medical School to publish a journal under directorship of Dr. Nosratolla Kasemi. Figure 1 shows the legal ground for journal publication by the Ministry of Culture.

The first issue of the journal known as *Nameh Mahaneh-ye Daneshkadeh-ye Pezeshki* (the Monthly Letter of School of Medicine) was published in 1943 (Figure 2).²

The Journal was initially managed by a team comprising of the Dean of Medical School — at the beginning, by Dr. Amir-Aalam, a professor of anatomy; then, by Dr. Javad Ashtiani, a professor of hygiene; and finally by Professor Oberling. The managing team also included Dr. Mostafa Habibi-Golpayegani (1904 – 1948), a professor of pathology and Dr. Nosratolla Kasemi, a professor of internal medicine. They worked together up to 1948.²

Dr. N. Kasemi (1909 – 1995), a graduate of Tehran Medical School (Figure 3) was the director and the first editor of the Journal from 1943 to 1948. Dr. Kasemi was also a poet and writer who has written many literary works in Persian. Prior to

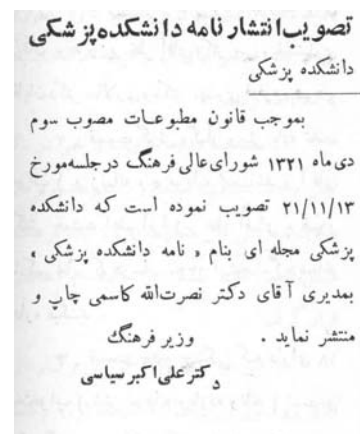


Figure 1. The permission for publication of the Journal granted by the Ministry of Culture, 1943.

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Figure 2. The front cover of the first issue of the Journal.



Figure 4. Dr. Amir-Aalam (1877 – 1961)

his appointment as the director of the medical journal, he had good experience in scientific publication.

The publication of Journal was highly appreciated by the faculty of medicine and Ministry of Culture's officials in such a way that they allotted a especial budget to its improvement.

In the first issue of the Journal (No. 1 and 2), the late Dr. Amir-Aalam (Figure 4) described its aim and scope and pointed out that in each issue, besides scientific papers, the main academic and health news would also be covered. Later on, the "Bulletin News of the Tehran Medical School" was published independently, supervised by the late Dr. Mohammad-Ali Hafizi (1904 – 1980), a



Figure 3. Dr. N. Kasemi (1909 – 1995)

pediatrician and secretary general of medical school.³ Thereafter, the medical journal was completely devoted to scientific issues.

The majority of manuscripts published in the journal were original papers and case reports on various subjects, especially infectious diseases. The articles published in the first issue included a report on the results of 18 cases of corneal graft performed in 1941 at Farabi Hospital affiliated to Tehran Medical School; the role of laboratory investigations in diagnosis of epidemic diseases; histopathologic study of cutaneous leishmaniasis in Iran; syphilis of the central nervous system in Iran, etc.

At the Medical School, Professor Oberling used to give scientific talks in French on up-to-date topics every two weeks. For example, when he came back to Iran from France in 1945, he elaborated on "sulfonamides;" and "penicillin" for his Iranian colleagues and medical students. He also discussed "electron microscopy" in another lecture for the first time. Some of these lectures were translated into Persian and published in the Journal. Two of his interesting papers were "the organization of medical education" and "public health program in Iran." In the first article, he focused on reorganization process of Tehran Medical School and its development based on modern scientific style. In the second one, he gave many useful comments regarding the importance of preventive measures for promoting public health standards in Iran.

In addition, important medical papers which

appeared in reputable international journals were also translated into Persian and published in the Journal. As an example, in the first issue, a translated article entitled “*Two medical approaches in the treatment of chronic gallbladder inflammations*” by E. Machline et al in *Press Medical*, 1935, was published.

The Journal was usually published monthly. Its 8th and 9th issues were completely devoted to typhus, because at that time, there was a life-threatening outbreak in Iran. In one of these issues, Dr. M.A. Hafizi wrote a comprehensive paper on the history of typhus.

Each issue of the Journal contained around 65 pages and had a circulation of 500. The Journal was sent to scientific staff, the libraries, and some physicians free of charge. At the end of each year, a cumulative author and subject index was published in the Journal.⁵ The editorial board reviewed the submitted papers and consulted external peer reviewers for evaluation of some manuscripts. Initially, the Journal was published at the Rangin Publishing Co. in Tehran. Since 1951, when Tehran University Press was founded, the Journal was published there.

The second phase of journal's activity was started in 1948 when Dr. M. Habibi-Golpayegani passed away and Dr. Jahanshah-Saleh (1905 – 1977) was appointed as the Dean of School of Medicine. Then, he assigned some of the professors of medicine, pharmacy, and dentistry as the editorial board of the Journal. He was an American-trained gynecologist and a pioneer in modern gynecology teaching in Iran. In 1942, he wrote a comprehensive Persian textbook on gynecologic disorders. Dr. Jahanshah-Saleh was appointed as the Minister of Health in 1950.⁴

The new editorial board in 1948 consisted of:

Dr. Naser Ansary (b. 1913, Isfahan): a French-trained parasitologist who became full professor in 1943. He wrote a textbook on parasitology in 1949. Dr. Ansary was the Vice-Chancellor of the Medical School between 1945 and 1946.⁴

Dr. Hossein Sohrab (b. 1902, Isfahan): a professor of microbiology who was graduated from Paris Medical School in 1938. He was the Vice-Chancellor of the Medical School in 1948. Dr. Sohrab wrote a textbook on microbiology for medical students in 1942, which was revised in 1950 with the collaboration of Dr. Mirdamadi, a

professor of serology.⁴

Dr. Mahmoud Siasi: a professor of dentistry who was born in Tehran in 1903. He was initially enrolled at Tehran Medical School in 1925. Then, he studied dentistry in France. He continued his education on oral surgery in Geneva.⁴

Dr. Sadegh Pirooz-Azizi (b. 1909, Ghazvin): a professor of internal medicine who was graduated in 1935 from Paris Medical School.⁴

Dr. Mohammad-Gholi Shams (1905 – 1995): a professor of ophthalmology who went to France in 1923 and enrolled at Lyon Medical School in Paris. He was graduated in 1927 and returned back to Iran in 1931. The late Dr. Shams started his academic activity in 1933. He eradicated the trachoma as the major cause of blindness in the South of Iran, especially in Dezful and Shooshtar in the Khuzestan Province with the help of International Society of Ophthalmology and his Iranian and Austrian colleagues. He performed the first corneal graft operation in 1934 at Farabi Hospital in Tehran. He established the Iranian Society of Ophthalmology in 1947 and founded the first eye journal in Iran in 1968.

Dr. Mohammad Gharib (1909 – 1975): he was born in Tehran, a French-trained pediatrician and pioneer of modern pediatrics in Iran.

Dr. Mohammad-Hossein Mafi (b. 1903, Tehran): he went to France in 1923 and initially, studied agriculture and was graduated in 1929. Then, he studied biological chemistry at Paris University. He returned to Iran in 1935 and was appointed as a professor of biological chemistry at the School of Medicine.⁴

Dr. Mohammad-Ali Maleki (1903 – 1991): he was born in Yazd and was graduated from Tehran Medical School in 1928. Then, he continued his education on dermatology in France. In 1949, he was appointed as a professor of dermatology. Dr. Maleki wrote the book of skin diseases in two volumes in 1947.⁴

Dr. Hassan Mirdamadi (b. 1901, Tehran): he was a graduate of Tehran Medical School who continued his education on serology in France and was assigned in 1940 as a professor of serology. He was the author of textbooks on microbiology (1936) and serology (1942) in Persian.⁴

Dr. Mahmoud Najmabadi (1903 – 2000): he was born in Tehran, and a physician who was lecturer of history of medicine at Tehran Medical School. He was a member of the first Iranian Academy. After foundation of the Academy of Medical Sciences of the Islamic Republic of Iran in

1990, Dr. Najmabadi was also appointed as a permanent member and worked at the Traditional Medicine Department of the Academy. His most famous work was a two-volume book entitled "history of medicine in Iran" (pre-Islamic and post-Islamic eras) published by Tehran University Press.

Dr. Seyyed-Mohammad Beheshti: he was the internal manager of the Journal. After a while, he became an editorial board member.

Dr. Moslem Bahadori: he was in charge of publication.⁵

The regular publication of the Journal was continued up to the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Then, after a short break, it was republished with a new strategy and editorial board. At present, Tehran University of Medical Sciences publishes

several journals both in Persian and English, on various fields of clinical and basic sciences of medicine.⁵

References

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The leaf and fruit of common fig tree (*Ficus carica*) in Estahban, Fars Province, 160 km from Shiraz (photo by M.H. Azizi MD).

Ficin, a proteolytic enzyme isolated from figs (*Ficus carica*, *globata* and *doliaria*); used as an anthelmintic and in industry as a protein digestant (P: 584, Stedman's Medical Dictionary, 25th Edition, Williams and Wilkins, 1990)