

Some Landmarks in the History of Medicine in Istanbul (Materials, Books, Documents, Periodicals And Buildings)

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Summary

Istanbul is a city rich in materials related with medical history. Besides museum of medical history general museums harbor materials concerning medical history. Furthermore books and periodicals related with medical history which are exhibited in buildings concerned with medical history and in various libraries plus documents on Ottoman Archives In Prime Ministry cast light to those interested in this topics.

Key Words; Museum, Medical Museum, Istanbul Museums.

The great diversity of the art of medicine can be traced back to its ancient roots. Its distinguished heritage is culled in contemporary libraries, archives and museums. The material related to medicine in these venues dramatically reveal the practice of healing in different societies.

Distinguished Professor Suheyl Unver, one of the founders of the discipline of medical history and deontology in Turkey, wrote in 1938 in the introduction to his book on this topic:

“There is no art or science whose history is as philosophical as that of medicine. No history provides a more brilliant demonstration of the faculty of comprehension and of the human intelligence. On the other hand, the science of medical history provides the starkest comparisons of the justified pride of the human being who penetrates to the depths of nature and his mixed feelings and helplessness on the face of a number of yet unknown matters. One of the most remarkable aspects of the art of healing is the revelation of certain matters through the mediation of great minds and their connection to the human condition. Despite the publica-

tion of numerous books on medical history in every language, few of the facts are known to our physicians, while a physician ought to be aware of the difficult work of self-knowledge.” (1-3).

It may be that no adventure novel is as exciting as the adventure of science and medicine. Different instruments for centuries were modern at the time when they were made. Physicians have employed various methods of treatment, and they have made and used, but the rapid progress of science, new discoveries and technological breakthroughs has rendered them old-fashioned, antiquated or obsolete. When more practical, hygienic instruments equipped with the latest technology came into use, the old jars, mortars, microscopes, bottles, X-ray tubes, injectors and sterilization tools were sometimes discarded and sold as scrap, and they sometimes ended up in the hands of connoisseurs.

When these instruments are displayed in one venue, the stages of medical history and the current state of affairs emerge clearly. The contemplation of a surgical set from the 4th century BC made by a great master is exciting and thought-provoking (4). Elegantly gilt medicine jars from the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century reflect the romanticism and the refined taste of the period.

Quaint names of manufactured pharmaceuticals like “Iodopepton Kazım”, “Shokalaksin Tevfik”, “Nevrozin Celal”, “Nazalin Hulusi”, “Fosfotin Necati” and “Teskin Fuad” make one smile and prompt a comparison with the current state of the pharmaceutical industry.

Not only instruments but also historical institutions such as “Dar-Al-Shifas and “Bimarhane” (House of Treatment and Convalescence) have their place in medical history. Instruments, buildings, manuscript, printed works and many other artifacts attest to the great diversity of medical practice. Quite a few buildings in Istanbul stand witness to this astounding wealth.

Cerrahpasha Medical Faculty, Department of Medical Ethics and History of Medicine, Museum of Medicine

Founded by Prof. Dr. Nil Sari in 1985, this constantly growing museum had to be relocated from the hall that had been designed as a museum at the Cerrahpasha Medical Faculty, Department of Medical Ethics and History of Medicine to a three-story, spacious and historic building on the same premises. Manuscripts, books and medical miniatures are displayed on the first floor of the three-story museum. The wide corridor functions as the exhibition hall for works primarily by painter-physicians as well as other painters. Old medical material related to fields such as bacteriology, biochemistry and pathology are displayed on the second floor. One of the wide halls of the third floor features pharmaceutical objects, the other, surgical instruments. Physicians’ diplomas, distinctions, decorations and portraits of the more famous ones are displayed in other chambers of the same floor. The walls of the corridors and the stairway are decorated with photographs and posters related to medical history and training in the country.

The items in the museum were made of materials such as glass, wood, paper, porcelain, ceramic and cloth. Pharmaceutical objects stand out among a number of other instruments used in nursing, midwifery, dentistry and traditional medicine. The mate-

rial comes mainly from the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. Old medicine jars and bottles marked with writings in the Arabic script with aesthetically appealing pictorial descriptions, bronze mortars from the Seljuk period, porcelain and glass mortars, corks, funnels, all kinds of glasses and large jars for storing the raw materials for drugs, as well as the glass materials and accurate scales including metal strips to weigh miniscule objects that come from some 19th century pharmacies make up a considerable part of the museum’s collection. The gilt jar marked with the word “Aloe” and depicting the plant by this name is one of the favorite pieces of both connoisseurs and casual visitors. This handsome jar was donated to our Department by the “Darülaceze” (House for the Destitute), which was founded by the Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamit II in 1898 and still functions in line with its original purpose. The museum also features microscopes, surgical instruments, physicians’ medicine kits, old drug packages and a number of other historical medical materials. Porcelain medicine jars from the Hamidiye Etfal Hospital, an X-ray tube from the 1920s, the set of a hairdresser-surgeon, physicians’ decorations, healing ewes used in folk medicine and amulets are some of the remarkable pieces in the collection. Oil paintings and watercolors in the property of the Department are also on display in this museum.

Museum of the Istanbul Medical Faculty, Department of Medical Ethics and History of Medicine, Museum of Medicine

The instruments used during Atatürk’s illness (5), a number of surgical instruments, physicians’ portraits, busts, desks used by famous physicians, various tools and instruments used in folk medicine and paintings related to medical history are displayed in this museum. Some of the more remarkable pieces are the oil paintings of acclaimed physicians such as Dr. Celal Muhtar and Dr. Besim Omer Akalın by Feyhaman Duran and the reproductions by the same painter of the portraits of chief physicians Abdülhak Molla and his son Hayrullah Efendi, whose originals are kept in the Aşiyân Museum.

Topkapı Palace Museum

Among the parts of the museum that are still intact, the Concubines' Hospital in the Harem Part of the Topkapı Museum and the Başlala Tower from where the chief physician used to work are of particular relevance for medical history (6-8).

Health Museum

In this museum which no longer exists, oil paintings by Dr. Ziya Huzni and Dr. Hikmet Hamdi designed to raise popular awareness on mumps, cholera, syphilis and other diseases were on display. Informative moulages and posters on various diseases and methods of protection were among its collection (9,10).

Museum of the Istanbul University Faculty of Pharmacy

It features a number of drug containers and other materials used by pharmacists. Besides these museums which are of direct interest for medical history, general museums such as Sadberk Hanım, the Military Museum, the Archaeology Museum and the City Museum contain relevant materials.

Buildings Related to Medical History

Istanbul is very rich in buildings related to medical history. Buildings such as the Süleymaniye Dar-Al-Shifas (Ottoman Hospitals)(11) which is part of the Süleymaniye Complex and is need of restoration, the Haseki Dar-Al-Shifas (12-14) which is part of the Haseki Complex and is currently used as a Theology Specialization Center, the Toptaşı Dar-Al-Shifas (15) that is used as a school, the Sultanahmet Dar-Al-Shifas that is used as a School of Art, the Bezm-i Alem Valde Sultan Vakıf Gureba Hospital under restoration, the Gülhane Military School of Applied Medicine (16,17) which is no longer in use, the first Maternity Hospital (18) that is planned to be converted into a museum, Haydarpasha Medical School (19), the Demirkapı Military Medical School currently used as the Military Materiel Office, the old buildings of Cerrahpaşa that are still in use, the Tahaffuzhane in the Şemsipacha district of Üsküdar, the Zeynep Kamil Hospital, the Istanbul Marine Hospital, the Maltepe Military Hospital, the Haydarpaşa Military Hospital,

the Gumussuyu Military Hospital (20), the French Hospital (La Paix), the Darülaceze, and a small section of the Children's Hospital (Hamidiye Etfal Hospital) the rest of which has sadly been destroyed are the landmarks of medical history in Istanbul (21).

Books, Periodicals and Documents on Medical History

The library of the Cerrahpasha Medical Faculty Department of Medical Ethics and History of Medicine has a large collection of manuscripts and printed works on medicine. The library of the Istanbul Medical Faculty, Department of Medical Ethics and History of Medicine History also contains manuscripts and printed works related to medical history. In addition, the *Gazette Medicale de Orient* in the Istanbul Medical Faculty, Department of Medical Ethics and History of Medicine contains important information on the medical history of the region. The Suleymaniye Library, one of the few in the world to hold manuscripts, has a large collection of works related to medical history. The rare books section of the Istanbul University is also very rich in works related to medical history. Relevant books may also be found at the Beyazıt Public Library, Atatürk Library and Topkapı Palace Library.

Ottoman Archival Documents contain the most extensive collection of documents on the medical history of the Ottoman Empire. Numerous documents are available to researchers under the classifications of Irade, Hatt-ı Hümayun, Cevdet and Yıldız. The archives of the Topkapı Palace Museum also contain documents related to medical history.

A large number of periodicals on our medical history can be found in libraries. In Istanbul, the Hakkı Tarık Us library contains the largest collection of periodicals related to medical history. It is followed in turn by the Atatürk Library and the Beyazıt Public Library (22).

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