

# In the Name of God the Most Merciful, the Most Kind Medical Services Expenses and Doctors Remuneration At the Times of the Arabic Islamic Civilization Era

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## Summary

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Medical profession is practiced since long time, although it is considered a holy work doctors have to earn for their lives, beside that hospitals and medicine expenses has to paid for. During the Arabic Islamic Civilization Era these were met by the kings , caliphs and rich people rewards and charity investments.

**Key words** Arabic Islamic Era , Expenses, Remuneration

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### *Preface*

Certainly the viewpoint about medical profession and in sequence about physician does not lack a holy trait mixed with an internal fear felt by the patient. This viewpoint started long time ago since the early human life on earth & since the early days of medicine. Medicine started with traditional and rudimentary ways of treatment alongside with the spiritual medicine that was experienced by clergies in the temples. Still some prophets had practiced medicine at their times. Both types of medical practice were aiming to keep healthy living and to treat patients from illnesses and to deal with them carefully and sympathetically. Some times both types were practiced simultaneously.

Being the only person allowed uncovering the patient i.e. his body, illnesses, and psychological attitude, make the medical profession respectful and fearful at the same time, that life is ever sacred then the help to make living longer and saving it from diseases this endeavor is considered a holy work and gives medicine its human character.

### **Historical Review**

In old days charging patients wasn't obligatory as well as the fees weren't fixed and the fees may be given after recovery. It has been mentioned that some

times these fees were given as jewels on beautiful plates with nice velvet or silk sheets covers<sup>1</sup> according to the assumption that saving human life is priceless.

Hippocrates -400 B.C- and other early pioneers insisted on medical ethics, which included that care, should be the same for poor and rich people and not to force the poor people to pay fees for treatment<sup>2</sup>. While there is controversy between the historians whether Hippocrates did charge his patients or not<sup>3</sup>, it seems that Galen – 200 A.C – had mentioned in one his books that he did not charge his patients<sup>3</sup>, and he give them drugs and even feed them freely and he may find some one to help bed redder.

It seems that charging patients at that old days differs according to the type of illness, duration of the treatment, who far the patient, the richness of the patient<sup>1</sup>.

### **Medical Services Expenses And Charges In Islam's Bases And Principles**

Medical ethics including charging the patients were deepened and gained utmost interest during Islamic civilization era according to the Islamic concepts which are based on the idea that the aim of human work in earthly life is to gain rewards in the other life (after death).

But according to Iben Abbass<sup>4</sup> –cousin and a friend of prophet **Mohammed** (most honored by God)- he mentioned that the Prophet had paid for venisection and this was considered as the base for the permission of the doctors charging in Islamic religious rules, but certainly not from the poor, and not to be a must in treating emergencies other wise the doctor will be considered as partner to the offender<sup>5</sup>.

### **Hospitals and Medical Services Expense (and doctors remuneration)**

There is an invaluable heritage of free charges which is still seen and part of it goes back to the Arabic Islamic civilization era with estimable principles and concepts for the people who used to consider the medical services as a work blessed by God and as a sort of alms (it is to be said that prior to the advent of Islam monks in the cloisters were treating ill people freely and on the same principle).

And when justice and welfare at that time reign the people feel themselves obliged to invest these properties to present more useful services and in better quality, there is an old story at the time of the fair caliph Omar bin Abdul aziz<sup>1</sup> – died 720 A.C- it said that if a man want to give a charity he would not find any one who asks for alms however he tries ,and when the progress and luxury reached a high level people will think to invest there charities and to win the bless of god by establishing hospitals and out of question for free services.

And it was in Baghdad where the first large hospital built<sup>6</sup>, Baghdad which was the center of Islamic civilization and the pioneer in any form of progress and through it all the sciences moved to other Islamic cities. Al Adhdi hospital<sup>7</sup> – 905 A.C- was the first large hospital established in Baghdad to be followed by around more than hundred hospitals all over the Islamic cities, and it is interesting to know that their building, arrangement and quality of medical services were beyond any limit and fiction.

Beside the medical services there were the best and rarest drugs, different delicious meals and according to the orders of the doctors to every patient, clean clothes, trained dressers and many servants, good cleanliness with bathing, rooms for every

specialty and for male and female ; there were clowns and musical bands to amuse the patients ; these hospitals were ready to welcome any patient day and night , to boot after the patient's recovery they used to pay him money to spent until he was able to return to his previous work again. Doctors were well paid including the fodder of their mules. Their salaries<sup>8</sup> range between 750 – 50 U.S.A.\$ ,it is to be said except for kings or Caliphs private doctors other doctors income was about the same for any store keeper in the market.

All these services were free of charge for poor and rich, the cost of these services is paid from the gains earned out of caliphs, princes or other rich men who keep their grooves, farms, markets, etc for charitable establishments. On the other hand doctors who practice medicine at there homes or in stores or at street purchase with there patients for the charge in advance or they ask for fixed charge, beside there are higher charges for surgical intervention as phlebotomy or cupping etc, at the time off Abassid an operation for cataract<sup>9</sup> may cost 15 U.S.A in minimum but it goes higher according to the wealth's of the patient.

Here a question may rise:

Do doctors at that periods make property from their jobs?

The answer is yes for some extent, since Jebrael Ibn\_Echtoshe -died 828 A.C- who was the most famous and probably the best physician at that time (he was the private doctor of Abbasid caliphs Al –Rashid, Al-Amin and Al-Maamoon). His property<sup>8</sup> reached a big sum, about milliards of Iraqi dinars (nowadays millions of U.S.A dollars), including cobalt, gold, jewels and hundreds of acres of agricultural lands.

Though others didn't try to treat lords although they were outstanding figures in medicine but they were satisfied in treating rich and poor people ,taking little fees like Ibn al Gazzar<sup>10</sup> –died 898 A.C- w ho lived in Tunisia and he was one of many brilliant physicians during his era and he wrote many valuable books. There are also others who complained of bad luck as one of Baghdad city doctors named Ibn Batlan<sup>11</sup> –died 1058 A.C-, because there were abundance of physicians at his time and a lot of charlatans

among them and it seems it is since long time people are not able to differentiate between good and bad doctors.

### ***Conclusion***

From what is mentioned above one may conclude:

1st Patients charges for the medical and surgical services both in general or private clinics was not the same for rich and poor before as it is very clear shown in the Arabic Islamic civilization Era.

2nd. Doctors richness was not a must as the main source of it was from the rewards and gifts from caliphs, kings, and other rich people and not from fees of common people.

In these days were many questions regarding the rise of medical services cost to be discussed on wide base.

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