

## ***History of medicine: a neglected subject in Iranian medical faculties***

***In remembrance of Dr. Mohammad Hossein Azizi (1958-2025), Professor of Otolaryngology, who loved history of medicine so much.***

***Ali Emadzadeh\****

*\*Department of Internal Medicine, MMS.C, Islamic Azad University, Mashhad, Iran.*

***Dear Editor,***

History, as a subject in the humanities, includes several branches. Among them, the history of medicine (HM) is particularly challenging because it is the intersection where empirical sciences meet the humanities. Research and publication in this field should be performed by academic authorities who are not only familiar with and enthusiastic about history, but also knowledgeable in medical sciences.

In the late 1800s, the humoral theory of medicine was replaced by the germ theory of disease. Since then, medical school leaders and students have often questioned historians about the reasons for including the study of “obsolete science” in medical education, beyond mere antiquarian interest or learning for its own sake (1). Although persuading medical students to understand the importance of HM is a universal challenge, its necessity remains imperative (2).

In some Iranian universities, there are academic courses for Master's degrees and PhDs in this field, but the necessity of teaching this subject to medical students is still underscored. In the past few decades, a course on HM was introduced for medical students in Iran; nowadays, however, according to the official medical school curriculum in Iran, there is no formal practical program for teaching this subject (3).

***\*Corresponding Author***  
***Ali Emadzadeh***

***Address:*** Aria Hospital, Golestan St., Shahid Chamran Ave., Mashhad, Iran.

***Postal Code:*** 9137714639

***Tel:*** (+98) 51 32 22 90 94

***Email:*** [ali\\_emadzadeh@iaui.ac.ir](mailto:ali_emadzadeh@iaui.ac.ir)

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In many Iranian medical schools, this subject has been merged with the course “medical ethics,” but in most universities, it has been abandoned and completely neglected. Although a course entitled “History of Culture and Civilization of Iran and Islam (HCCII)” has been integrated into the curriculum as a core requirement in some medical schools, the outcomes have been disappointing. Salehi et al. demonstrated this point by showing that there was no meaningful difference in the knowledge scores of medical students who participated in the HCCII course and those who did not (4). On the other hand, Iran has a rich heritage rooted in the country’s brilliant background, spanning from Gondishapur Academy in Sasanid Empire to the Islamic Golden Age in the medieval era (5,6). Since recognizing this heritage is invaluable to developing the scientific identity of Iranian physicians, it is essential to integrate this subject into the Iranian medical education curriculum.

This inattention of the medical education authorities to HM may have negative outcomes for the future generations of Iranian physicians, some of which are as follows:

1. Dissociation of the current and upcoming generations from their past heritage, leading to alienation from their rich culture
2. Paving the way for those involved in pseudoscience to dismiss scholars such as Rhazes and Avicenna as opponents of modern science, although these great physicians actually introduced epidemiological methods into the world of medical sciences (7)
3. Unfamiliarity of modern medical researchers with clinical findings discussed in earlier medical resources, which might still be useful nowadays
4. Lack of familiarity with distinguished medical figures of the past who can serve as role models in shaping the personality of upcoming physicians

To overcome these obstacles and prevent the aforementioned negative outcomes, I propose the following:

1. Integrating a mandatory, two-credit “History of Medicine” course into the curriculum for all students of medicine, dentistry, and pharmacy
2. Offering financial support for academic projects and dissertations in the field of HM

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| 3. Allocating a part of Iranian medical academic journals to articles in the field of HM                                                                                                          | students to explore the exhibits, while organizing discussion panels with historians                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 4. Establishing a chair of “History of Medicine” in all Iranian medical faculties                                                                                                                 | Adopting these proposals would both help preserve our scientific heritage and constitute an investment                                                                                                                                                             |
| 5. Promoting effective collaboration between the departments of “History” in humanities faculties and “History of Medicine” in medical faculties to enhance the quality of research in this field | in educating physicians who possess a well-anchored scientific identity and heightened awareness.                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 6. Granting cultural credit points in the academic promotion system for medical faculty members who perform research in the field of HM                                                           | Attention to the points above will lead to progress in developing familiarity with HM. Otherwise, detachment from medical heritage will be complete, and the future generations of physicians will have little sympathy for their scientific heritage and culture. |
| 7. Improving collaboration between Iranian medical faculties and medical schools in other countries to advance research within this scope                                                         | <b>Competing Interests</b><br>There is no conflict of interests.                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 8. Founding “History of Medicine” museums in medical faculties and encouraging the                                                                                                                | <b>Ethical Approval</b><br>Not applicable.                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

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