



Health Sciences in Iran; Past and Present

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ABSTRACT

As this is the first issue of the International Archives of Health Sciences, a scholarly journal of Kashan University of medical Sciences, we start with an editorial of Dr. Rouhullah Dehghani, the editor-in-chief, to explain the aims and views of the editorial board members and the scope of the journal.

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Editorial

The World Health Organization (WHO) defined (1946) the health sciences as state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity [1, 2].

There are two main approaches to health sciences [2]:

- The study and research of the human body with its health-related issues, to understand how humans (animals) function;
- The application of acquired knowledge to improve health and to prevent and cure diseases or other physical and mental impairments.

It covers many sub-fields such as biology, biochemistry, epidemiology, pharmacology, physics and medical sociology. Applied health sciences leads to better attempt in understanding and improvement of human health in different areas such as health education, biomedical engineering, biotechnology and organized interventions based on the developed principles and procedures.

While, the clinical practitioners focus mainly on the health of individuals, public health practitioners consider the overall health of the communities and the populations. Community health sciences focus on the health as influenced by the structure of community and social, cultural, physical, and biological parameters of the environment [3].

Regarding to health and medicine, Iran has a rich history and the experiences of this nation has significantly influenced our present knowledge. Contacts with other countries and cultures had influenced the development of health studies in Iran from ancient times to the present day. Persian scholars cooperated in the development of health and improvement of patient care. These scholars developed a rational approach for understanding the evaluation of human diseases by assessing environmental factors of patients for more than 3000 years. Thrita was the first skillful man in the art of healing of wounds and who also acquainted with methods of how to prevent the sickness as well as to repel the disease or fever. Iranians were the first to establish known empire of the world. They also established the first International University at 250CE in

Gondishapur. The University of Gondishapur was established during the kingdom of Shahpour I (224-641 CE), a king of Sassanian era, and had trained many students in medicine and other sciences from all over the world [4, 5]. As a cosmopolitan city, Gondishapur became the center of medical study for several centuries and improved the level of medical teaching by founding the first teaching hospital. Elgood (1952) stated that credit for our current hospital system must be given to Persia [6]. The University of Gondishapur prospered under the kingdom of Khosrow Anushirvan, another Sassanid king, who stated that 'we have never rejected anyone for their religion or origin'. Greek scientists fleeing the persecution of Byzantine rulers were admitted by this wise King who commissioned to translate Greek and Syriac texts into Pahlavi, the language of ancient Iran [6]. By the order of Khosrow Anushirvan, a scientific symposium was held in Gondishapur and all deliberations were recorded in Pahlavi language [7].

The scholars and graduates of Gondishapur were later appointed to important governmental positions. For instance, the minister of health (Dorostbod), was usually chosen from the best physician and the minister of education (Farhangbod), was a scholar of philosophy, logic, mathematics and psychology [4, 5]. To advance the science of medicine, Khosrow dispatched the famous Iranian physician, Borzoya (Borzouyeh) to India, who brought medical and scientific books, herbal plants and introduced the game of chess to Iranians. Indian doctors also accompanied the Iranians to this land. The first world medical conference under the patronage of Anushirvan was convened at 550CE in Cteciphon. Hundreds of Iranian physicians and Mobeds, and physicians of other countries attended this congress. The famous national poet of Iran, Ferdowsi, has versified this historical event in his book, Shah Nameh. At that time, our sciences of pharmacology and alchemy were considered "the most advanced in the world".

The progress of Iranian sciences was interrupted by the Arab invasion at 630AD. Many centers of excellence and/or libraries were destroyed. Thousands of valuable books were burned and scholars killed. However, the Iranian scientists carried

on and the science of Persia resurfaced during the Islamic period. The saved books from the Arab carnage were translated from Pahlavi to Arabic. The medical book of Avicenna, Canon, was one the most famous books of ancient medical science in evidence-based medicine, experimental medicine [8], clinical trials, randomized control trials [9, 10], efficacy tests [11, 12], and the idea of a syndrome in the diagnosis of specific diseases [13].

The importance of health and wellness is known through the history of the world. In the new era, there is more need to further studies and challenging aspects of health problems. The first task of Social Determinants of Health (SDH) Research Center of Kashan University of Medical Sciences (KAUMS) is attempt to research in order to progress in health sciences to prevent individuals, families and communities from diseases. This is the initial issue of the first volume of the International Archives of Health Sciences. We will endeavor to address the various factors of research in Health Sciences for international communication and practice. We are committed to gathering opinions, recommendations and necessary evidence that will help in improving the "quality of life" and seek solutions for problems. David L. Heymann, the executive director of communicable diseases of WHO said that "to enter the new millennium, we are successfully preventing and controlling many important diseases, but we must continue to develop effective methods for their prevention and control. We must be on guard for other communicable diseases that may newly emerge. We look forward to work together in the restructured WHO to ensure improved systems as needed to maintain the process of health for all" [14]. This volume of international Archives of Health Sciences is a peer-reviewed that disseminates information, its sense of scholarship, experience knowledge, practice with investigation of all health sciences with approach to medical care. The aim of this journal is to supply the scientists and all related workers of health with knowledge to share and to create

awareness and quality of improving health status of all individuals, families and communities.

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