

NEWS

THE 27TH CONGRESS OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE

At the last Congress of the International Society of the History of Medicine, which was held at Plovdiv in Bulgaria during August, 1978, the General Committee of the Society decided to hold the next Congress, which will be the 27th at Barcelona in Spain. This will take place between the 2nd and 13th of September, 1980. The topics of the Congress will be as follows :

- The history of psychiatry.
- The emigration of Spanish Physicians.
- Ibn Sina (Avicenna), on the 1000th anniversary of his birth.
- The development of naval medicine.
- Various topics.

Information about the Congress may be obtained from :

The Organising Secretary,
XXVIIeme Congress International de l' Histoire de la Medecine,
Academia de Ciencas Mediques de Catalunga,
Pasco Bonanova 47,
Barcelona 6,
Spain.

JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH INTERPLANETARY SOCIETY

Dr Mitchell Sharpe of the Alabama Space and Rocket Center Huntsville, Alabama, is to be the editor of a new annual issue : the *Journal of the British Interplanetary Society*. This *Journal* will be devoted to the history of rocketry and astronautics, and hopes to attract as many scholars as possible from departments of history of science and technology. Articles from student of these subjects are to be especially encouraged. Anyone wishing to contact Dr. Sharpe with suggestions for the new publication or to submit material for consideration or to submit material for consideration can write to him at the following address :

Alabama Space and Rocket Center,
Huntsville, Alabama 35802,
U. S. A.

SYMPOSIUM ON STUDIES IN HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY
OF SCIENCE, THEIR EDUCATIONAL ROLE AND BEARING
ON CONTEMPORARY PROBLEMS

University of Melbourne, Australia

23-25 August, 1979

The Symposium is being sponsored by the Australian Academy of Science through its National Committee for History and Philosophy of Science.

The broad aim of the Symposium is to bring together all those who are concerned with the study of science from a general point of view as a social and intellectual phenomenon, and to provide a national forum in which matters of common interest may be discussed.

It is intended that the papers presented at the Symposium will help stimulate a specifically Australian contribution to the contemporary debate on the nature of science and its role in society, and will lead to a discussion of the best ways of presenting these issues to students and to members of the general public.

Correspondence relating to the scientific programme should be directed to :

Department of History and Philosophy of Science,
University of Melbourne,
Parkville, Vic. 3052, Australia.

If you are interested in attending this Symposium,
please write to :

Conference Secretary,
Australian Academy of Science,
P. O. Box 783,
Canberra City ACT 2601, Australia.

NATIONAL SEMINAR ON HISTORY OF MEDICINE IN MEDIEVAL INDIA

A two-day National Seminar on History of Medicine in Medieval India was held on 5-6 March, 1979 in New Delhi in the premises of the Indian National Science Academy under the Convenorship of Professor O. P. Jaggi. It was jointly sponsored by the Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi and the Institute of History of Medicine and Medical Research, New Delhi. The Seminar was planned in six sessions as follows :

- Session I.* History of Basic Concepts of the Prevalent Medical Systems in particular to Unani Tibb.
- Session II.* History of Concepts of Infection and Infectious Diseases including Epidemics under Unani Tibb and Diseases due to Deficiencies of Vital Principles in the body.
- Session III.* Source Material in Medieval Medicine and Problems in Research.
- Session IV.* History of Pharmacology.
- Session V.* Medical Services in the Army and Problems of Treatment of War-wounds.
- Session VI.* Plenary Session.

Forty-five papers were presented in the Seminar by scholars of India and abroad. Professor V. Ramalingaswami, President, INSA in his inaugural address observed, "Without a proper understanding of the past, there cannot be a proper conception of the meaning of the present and no perception of the future. In the History of Medicine, as Henry Sigerist said, is both *History and Medicine*, a part of history of our civilization". What were the dominant diseases at that time? How did people maintain and promote their health? How effective were the various therapeutic and prevention measures adopted? In what ways did the socio-economic, religious philosophical and political factors influence the pattern of health and disease? You will discuss these aspects during the Medieval Period and reconstruct the medical past of India as truthfully and as objectively as possible. As the programme of your Seminar shows, this reconstruction is to be done from variety of sources, which need be interpreted with great care in the light of prevailing concepts. Texts and manuscripts not only dealing with medicine, but also with religion, philosophy will need be scanned carefully. Sculptures, epigraphic records, archaeological findings, paintings, buildings of the time, folklore, legends, this is the amalgam out of which our history has to be reconstructed". After this address, the technical session was started.

R. L. Verma of the Institute of Medical Science (Delhi) tried to explain the exact conotation of *pn uma* in Unani medicine. B. D. Tiwari discussed about the basic concepts of prevalent systems during the period. N. P. Rai of the Institute of Medical Science (B. H. U.) attracted the attention of the scholars to the origin and development of pulse examination for diagnosis of diseases. He observed that pulse examination, known as '*Nāḍī Parīkṣā*' in Āyurveda was used primarily for prognostic purposes and gradual development occurred under the influence of Unani and the Tantric system developed in India. He pointed out that the rythmic breath of the pulse not only signified life but a slight variation in it also indicates hunger, lust, anger, anxiety, fear, fever, intoxication etc. Sakir Zamil and A. J. Khan of the Tibbia College (Delhi) discussed about the conception of infection and intestinal amoebiasis in Unani medicine. S. P. Pal of the Jadavpur University pointed out that the organic therapy (administration of extracts of animal organs) was much practised in Medieval India. Among organs used for treating various diseases, the names of frog, lizard, sparrow, lion, bear and peacock and skull-bone of men have been mentioned. M. V. Ramanan and H. S. Sharma of the Gujrat Ayurvedic University, emphasised the role of 'Siddha' and 'Rasaśāstra' system of medicine in Medieval India. M. S. Khan of Calcutta attracted the attention of the scholars to an Arabic source by Ibn Abi Usaybi (1207 A. D.) which deals with the Indian Physician and their medical works. In this connection, he put forth a suggestion for a survey of all the Arabic sources from seventh Century to twelfth century containing information of Indian Science. He asserted that this survey would be very useful for the re-construction of History of Indian Medicine. He further observed that the survey will help to detect translated Sanskrit works in Arabic while original Sanskrit works have been lost. He emphatically pointed out that Unani system depended a lot on Āyurveda and drew over 200 drugs and several medicinal preparations from Āyurvedic system. S. Gurumurthy of the University of Madras focussed that a tenth century inscription has been traced in South India which reveals that the dispensaries and hospitals flourished in Medieval India and doctors were paid free land and salaries. These hospitals were mostly run by temples and religious institutions and its objective was to carry free medical aid to suffering humanity. P. V. Sarma of Benaras Hindu University, B. N. Singh of the State Ayurvedic College (Lucknow), R. G. Ghatnekar of Tilak Ayurvedic Mahavidyalaya (Poona) discussed about the contribution of the Medieval scholars in the field of *Materia Medica*. O. P. Jaggi, the Convenor of the Seminar outlined some of the important aspects of European Medicine in Medieval India and categorically questioned, 'how many of us know that inoculation against small pox was common practice throughout India long before Edward Jenner discovered his famous cow vaccine in 1796'?

R. S. Singh of Benaras Hindu University emphasised the contribution of Unani Materia Medica in the identification of Vedic plants and G. M. Caturvedi of the same university stressed on the medicinal use of opium and cannabis in Medieval India. Gurdip Singh of the Gujrat Ayurvedic University, Suresh Kumar of Benaras Hindu University and A. K. Bose of Nilratan Sarkar Hospital and Medical College, Calcutta discussed about various uses of Aphrodisiacs in Medieval India and quoted Medieval authority regarding drugs to prompt sexual health. Some of the valuable aphrodisiacs in the Medieval Period were roasted meat of venison or sparrow, fish broth, omelette of crocodile eggs, and honey. Prem Vati Tewari of Benaras Hindu University eloquently presented with tables and charts of various medicinal preparations and their uses for obstetric and gynaecological disorders in Medieval India. P. S. Nair of the Ayurvedic College (Coimbatore), Shyam Singh of Central Drug Research Institute, Lucknow, K. K. Thakral, G. P. Tewari and D. G. Thatte of State Ayurvedic College, Lucknow discussed various aspects of the medical services of the Army and problems of treatment of war-wounds in the Medieval India. Some of these papers will be published in the subsequent issues of the *Indian Journal of History of Science*.

In the Plenary Session, D. V. Subba Reddy, fervently requested that the scholars should try to make English translation of the available important manuscripts of Medieval India and would try to go deep into the subject keeping in mind the contemporary contribution made in other cultural areas and the interaction made by the system of Indian system and vice versa. Instead of referring the same sources again and again, the scholars should locate more new sources. In the end he emphasized that some positive steps should be taken to impress the Government for more encouragement in the field.

A. K. Bag