

## MEDICAL REMUNERATION IN THE ANCIENT GREEK ERA

**Prof. J. Fronimopoulos  
and Lect. Dr. J. Lascaratos**

Athen

Problems concerning remuneration for medical care existed many centuries before the ancient Greek period. In primitive societies and tribes, practitioners, mainly priests and magicians, on giving treatments, were sometimes rewarded with precious gifts, and other times punished for failure (COUSIS 1929). The first records of doctor's medical fees and punishments for unsuccessful treatments appear in HAMMURABI's code (BUSACCHI 1951 – MARGOTTA 1968). The Egyptian priest-doctors were payed for their services from the temple's income. But sometimes, in exceptional situations, they offered medical treatment free of charge.

In our article about medical remuneration in the ancient Greek era, we intend to investigate this question on the basis of historical evidence in monographies and books. Thus, we find first mention of medical remuneration in mythology: a doctor named **MELAMBUS**, was rewarded by PRITOS, King of Epidaurus, with one-third of his kingdom for curing his daughter of melancholia. According to PINDAROS, **Asclepius** treated a dying man, and accepted handsome payment for his services. For this unethical behaviour, he was punished by ZEUS, who punished Asclepius on another occasion, when

the King of Hell (Hades), PLOUTON, accused Asclepius of reducing his clientele by his successful treatments, sometimes even free-of-charge (DIODORI, 4th Bible- SAMOTHRAKIS 1929).

In mythology, we also learn that **APOLLO** was authorised to treat the afflicted and receive payment. This is mentioned in ARISTOPHANES' comedy "PLOUTOS", where we also learn that medical examination by priests was usually free of charge in ancient Greece.

Private doctors of that time were not only rewarded for their services, but sometimes received enormous payments. The historian HERODOTOS cites the case of a certain doctor named **DIMOKIDIS**, who was paid one talent for medical services in Aegina, a hundred Attica Mna in Athens and two talents in Samos by the tyrant POLYCRATES. He also received rich gifts from PARIOS, King of Persia for treating him successfully for an orthopedic disease. He also treated his wife ATOSSA, KYROS' daughter of a granuloma in her breast. For these services, the King, who was also successfully treated for persistent headaches where Egyptian doctors had failed, ordered that DIMOKLIS should have a place at the King's table – an extremely rare honour.

Another doctor, **IDALIEUS ONASILOS**, was invited to Cyprus, to offer his services in the army during a war against the Persians (5th century B.C.); he received one talent in payment plus housing with garden (TOULIATOS 1957).

According to PLINIOS, Dr. **CLEOMVROTOS**, was rewarded by ANTINOCHOS for medical services with a hundred Attica talents – a sum equal to 600,000 golden drachmas. **EVINOR** from Argos (4 – 3rd Century B.C.) was honoured by the Athenians with garlands and naturalisation.

According to ALKMEON, Dr. **GORGIAS** divided illnesses into statirien and talantien, proportionately to statir or talent payment. On the other hand, Dr. **XENOTIMOS**, the TIMONEXOS, was rewarded with a gold garland and praised for his free medical services in the island of Cos (PANAGIOTACOS 1953 – TOULIATOS 1956, 1957).

The ancient greek doctors, in direct proportion to their education, were distinguished as practitioners or creators (originators), as regularly educated or architects, and as amateur-cultured or well-educated (GARRISON 1929 – PANAGIOTACOS 1953). Besides the doctors in private practice, there were the following groups:

#### a) **Public or Communal Doctors**

They were elected by vote in the public church according to their qualifications, ethics and the citizens' estimation. Their duties included being present at the gymnasiums, taking part in medical juries, civil medicine, and

fighting epidemics. This institution was adapted in the 6th century B.C., and medical services of these doctors were rewarded by public salary, without any other form of payment. Later in the 5th century B.C., their remuneration was paid out of the income of the temples, called "medical tax". Evidence of this institution exists in DIODOROS and in ARISTOPHANES' comedy, "Acharnis".

#### b) **Military Doctors**

This service became widespread in the era of SOLON, although it was already known in HOMER's time, when doctors were rewarded with an honorary salary (PANAGIOTACOS 1953). In HOMER's poems we meet the two sons of Asclepius, **MACHON** and **PODALIRIOS**, participating in the Troias campaign as military doctors (DIODOR, 1st, 4th, 12th Biblos. – HOMER's ILIAS II Vol).

XENOPHON in his historical book KYROU ANAVASSIS, also mentions **KTISSIAS**, who treated the Persian King ARTAXERXIS, wounded by KYROS. He also notes that in this army there were eight military doctors, one in each regiment, for treating the wounded soldiers. These eight doctors were practitioner surgeons, paid by salary like the other mercenaries.

#### c) **Priest-Doctors in the Asclepeiea**

It was forbidden for priest doctors offering medical services in the Asclepeiea to receive any particular reward other than their food and keep in the temples. However, patients were supposed to pay for their treatment, in the form of special fees to the temple treasury, which fees in the Asclepeieon of ALICARNASSOS exceeded a ninevolos silver coin (COUSIS 1929).

These temples had certain measures to frighten the patients into paying their fees. Such measures included priests appearing to the patients at night, reminding them that they ought not forget to pay before leaving the temple; for the same purpose, stone tablets with frightening inscriptions were displayed in the temples. In 150 B.C., the historian **PAUSANIAS** mentions them, these stone plates already being known in the era of STRAVON, who called them 'tablets' (pinakes). Two of these tablets were found during excavations by P. CAVADIAS in 1883 (GARRISON 1929); from them we learn the kind of fee paid by the patients. Thus AMVROSIA from Athens was obliged by the priest, who appeared to her during the night and reminded her about her duty to pay the fees, and she offered the temple a silver pig, both as reward for the treatment of her eyes and as a penalty for being afraid and disputing the God's therapeutic capacities (ARAVANTINOS 1907).

From another tablet, we learn of a case concerning a doctor's yearly payment. One yet another is inscribed the case of the patient ECHEDOROS

who did not pay to the temple the money given to him by another patient called PANDAROS, and for this piece of deceit, was punished by the priest who added to his dermatological illness, that of PANDAROS.

On some other tablets there is mention of priests asking for payment for medical services, and on other tablets are to be found inscriptions concerning different kinds of payment. The tablets with frightening inscriptions bear evidence to the existence of patients who were bad payers, who secretly left the temple after their treatment.

Besides cash payment, patients used to bring gold, silver or marble offerings to the God, sometimes representing parts of their body that had been cured – eyes, ears, legs, etc. This custom still prevails today in similar offerings presented to holy icons in the churches. A number of such offerings were found in the excavations at Epidaurus and Korinth (KASAS 1979). Other offerings included loaves of bread and fruit left on the altar which were collected later in the evening by the priests.

The historian PAUSANIAS quotes that some rich patients used to offer houses to the temples, and others constructed temples with their own money. On another tablet found in the Asclepeion of Epidaurus, it is inscribed that IPPOLYTOS offered twenty horse to the temple, in payment of the services of the God Asclepius who revived him from the dead, having died from the curses of his father, THISSEUS.

During the time of **HIPPOCRATES**, medical care began to be offered free of charge. Thus the Athenians honoured HIPPOCRATES for his financial disinterest with the title "Second Hercules" in the Eleusinian Ceremonies, and citizen of Athens, and gave him and his descendants the right to be served in the Prytaneon (MITROPOULOS 1950 – FRONIMOUPULOS, LAMBROU 1981).

Once, HIPPOCRATES was invited by AVDARIDITES to treat DEMOCRITOS, and on doing so, refused payment for his medical services. A similar esprit exists in HIPPOCRATES' letter to KRATEVA, in which he recommends the founding of a union of doctors to prevent avarice; also, in his "Orders", he writes, " . . . where philanthropy exists, love of the patient and interest in science also exist; it is preferable that a doctor should be accused of ingratitude by the beneficiary, than to cheat and make money from the sufferings of others." (COUSIS 1929).

**HIPPOCRATES'** example was followed by all his pupils Asclepiades, and it is rather difficult to accept certain aspects, reported by LITTRÉ and COUSIS, that HIPPOCRATES treated in return for some reward, which would appear to be quite opposed to this oath concerning medical ethics. This mistaken view is probably due to certain phrases of PLATO, in which SOCRATES asks

HIPPOCRATES OF ATHENS, who wanted to be taught by the sophist GORGIAS, why he wanted to study medicine. It is obvious from the articulation of the dialogue and remarks made, that PLATO, although drawing a parallel to reality through the synonymous character HIPPOCRATES OF ATHENS, and talking about salary, was using poetic licence, not referring to the renowned doctor, HIPPOCRATES, accepted as chief of all doctors. Besides, the same author, PLATO, writes in another of his books, that, " . . . a doctor is never looking to his own interest, but only his patient's interest . . . and not to make money."

In the following generations, HIPPOCRATES' example was followed by many doctors, and the chief of the dogmatic school, **DIOCLES** from Karystos, called "Hippocrates Junior" because of his wisdom and philanthropy. (COUSIS 1929).

Thus HIPPOCRATES' era characterises not only a new period in scientific medicine, but also in medical deontology, building up the right climate of thinking as regards medical reward, existing in the ancient Greek doctors. Thus the priest doctors of the Asclepeieia, who secured fees by frightening the undisciplined patients, were slowly replaced by the Hippocratic doctors who believed that it is preferable to receive gratitude than money from their patients.

Since then, thousands of years have passed, and humanity, instead of cultivating the Hippocratic ideal and ethics in medicine on a parallel to technology's development, every day forgets more of the principles of human rights, and cruel violence progressively replaces philanthropy. It is sad that medicine cannot be free of this destructive influence.

It is fortunate that recently medical schools and international and national societies, like the Academia Ophthalmologica Internationalis and others, are making great efforts on the one hand to strengthen and preserve the Hippocratic Oath, which after so many thousands of years still possesses the magical quality of Hippocratic idealism, so lacking in today's society, and on the other hand to teach and cultivate – mainly in the young generation – ethics and philanthropy and respect, irrelevant of race, religion or colour.

Medicine, which is not a money-making science, but rather a philanthropic mission, must be performed with disinterest for financial reward, which is something that can be adopted only by educated men in a well-adjusted and organised society.

### Summary

The writers investigate the problems concerning rewards for medical services in the ancient Greek era, beginning with mythology. At that time, private

doctors were often remunerated with high fees. A short description follows outlining the distinction between public doctors, military doctors, and priest doctors. The question of medical fees is investigated on the basis of historical evidence in books, on tablets, etc. In conclusion, the Hippocratic period is discussed, when medicine began to be offered according to the principles of Hippocrates' Oath; that medicine is a philanthropic mission to be performed with disinterest for profit.

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Prof.  
Dr. J. N. Fronimopoulos  
6 Neofytou Vamva St.  
Athens I38  
Greece