

MEDICAL TREATMENT OF MACEDONIANS IN 19 CENTURY

Silvana Sidorovska-Chupovska,
Institute of National History, Skopje
Ss Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, Macedonia

Keywords: Macedonian, medical treatment, health, hygienic conditions diseases, superstitions, pharmacopoeia, preventive measures, physician-empiricists.

Summary: Most of Macedonian population lived in unhygienic conditions, which was the cause for many diseases. Illiterate population sought their remedy in folk medicine. Macedonian leaders of the National Revival and physicians greatly contributed to raising the population's awareness. With their activities and manner of curing they helped the population to overcome their stuffiness.

Клучни зборови: Македонци, лекување, здравствени, хигиенски услови, болести, верувања, фармакопеја, превентивни мерки, лекари-емпирици.

Резиме: Најголем број од македонското население живеело во нехигиенски услови кои биле причина за појава на многу болести. Необразованото население спасот го барало во народната медицина. Во подигањето на свеста на населението голем допринос имале македонските преродбеници и лекари. Тие со својата активност и начинот на лекувањето му помагале на населението да излезе од заостанатоста.

Health care in a country is one of the important elements for preserving and improving people's health and their living and working environment, and for protection of their living standards and social safety. A great thinker once said: "Society with poor and bad education and bad health system will always be poor." The history of the health and medical culture in Macedonia including the social health and medical conditions in the 19th century has shown that pioneer steps in this respect were made in Macedonia at the time. This mostly applies to the mid-century when the Ottoman authorities started introducing the first laws on organization of health care. That step was only one amongst measures for protection on the population in the Empire as well.

Health and hygienic conditions in Macedonia in 19 century were on unenviable level. Most part of the population was poor and illiterate with low level of health culture and lived in unhygienic conditions. Lacking adequate medical help, the population was treated by way of superstitions existing in numerous forms: quackery, healers, belief in quacks, diviners, fortunetellers, startellers, dreams, omens, belief in relics, amulets, religious books and etc. Superstitions also dominated in the belief in negative forces of witches, demons and etc.(Светозаревиќ,2010:7-8). Folk considerations and beliefs in mystic causes of most diseases also raised undertaking of various preventive mystic-based measures (Етнологија на Македонците, 1996:248). Superstitions were also spread a lot among the Muslim population. This could be read in one of the travel pieces written by Elijah Blunt¹ daughter of the English consul Charles Blunt: "...a physician is called very rarely; the diseased treatment is left to their mothers' instincts assisted by an aged woman and her suspicious pharmacopeia², and they strictly believed in the preachers's divine experience and his superstitious ritual (Матковски, 2001:273).

Macedonian leaders of national revival also opposed the primitiveness that existed among the people and their beliefs in dark thoughts and magic, superstitious forces, superstitions and prejudices. They had important role in raising the awareness of the population combating superstitions and prejudices.

Macedonian leaders of national revival Kiril Peychinovich and Yordan Hadzhikonstantinov-Dzhinot were the first to initiate the fight against superstition. K. Peychinovich combated superstition with his works attacking spiritual misery by defending Christianity and its norms. In his work *Utešenje Grešnim*, he broadly treated hygiene in marriage, he opposed minor marriages, incest and marriages among relatives (Светозаревиќ, 2010:9). Yordan Hadzhikonstantinov-Dzhinot in his poem *Aurora* published in *Tsarigradski Vesnik* (1852), indicated to superstitious people: "Wake up, don't be blind, introduce yourselves in science, don't believe in old women - time has passed but you did not come to mind"(Цариградски вестник,1852:3). Macedonian leader of revival Kuzman Shapkarev also collected material related to customs, superstitions, prejudices and data on life of a mother and her child in Ohrid, Prilep, Veles, Kukush and

¹ Elijah Blunt was a daughter of the English consul Charles Blunt in Thessaloniki. Later she married the English consul. She lived in Turkey for almost 20 years. She left detailed and precise data on the Christians and Muslims' lives in Macedonia.

² Pharmacopeia – medicine preparation, instructions for preparation and maintenance of medicines.

Gevgelija. The gathered material titled “Zbornik na narodni umotvorbi” was published in Sofia in 1891.

Macedonian people in addition to all hardship even for generations handled to absorb experiences that helped them to apply folk medicine to improve their health. Valuable data related to treatment and application of folk medicine in 19 century also constitute mythographers’ folklore legacies. Among the signs of black plague, according to their beliefs, were three dots on the knee. There were also opposite cases, appearance of the dots without emergence of the disease. According to Cepenkov, a pain was an indicator whether the diseased would heal or die. If it was heartache he would die, and if the pain was not felt at any other part of the body the diseased would not die (Цепенков, 1972:129).

Part of folk medicine and pharmacy in Macedonia in 19 century were folk remedy books. Those records, in addition to their proof of the practices and activities of the characteristic folk medicine, include notes about folk healers and their skill and knowledge in the area of gathering and processing various herbs (Гушевска, 2008:97). Remedy books also contain healing formulas with parts of animals or birds, different prays and etc.(Георгиевски,2008:344).

Remedy books were written, rewritten and added by folk leaders of national revival in Macedonian language try to contribute to improving health and health culture of Macedonian population. among most popular remedy books used in 19 century are the following: “Arhierejski trebnik” dated from 16 century, “Pop-Nikoloviot zbornik” dated from 18 century, “Razlichni pouchitelni nastavlenija” written by Yoakim Krchovski and published in 1814 in Buda; “Ogledalo” (Buda, 1816) and Utešenje Grešnim (Thessalonica, 1840) written by Kiril Psychinovich, “Nachelnoe uchenie” (Thessalonica, 1814) and “Trijazichnikot” (Thessalonica, 1842) written by Teodosij Sinaitski, “Ohridski lekarstvenik” from 1843, “Bigorski lekarstvenik” from first half of 19 century, “Konstantinovata lekarusha” from 1853, “Veleshki lekarstvenik” printed in Tsarigradski Vesnik in 1855, “Sovetnik za lekuvanje razni bolesti” written by Dimitrija Smrikarov (Samokov, 1874), “Pravilnik za zdravstvena zashtita na uchenicite” (1880), “Po narodnata medicina I nejzinata nomenklatura vo Makedonija” (Sofia, 1894) written by Kuzman Shapkarev, “Ohridski narodni lekovnici” written by Eftim Sprostranov, “Lechebnik” written by Dimitar Daskalov, and etc.(Петков,Ступар,1990:11-12) Remedy books written in Macedonian dialect found in the village of Lazaropole also dated from the second half of 19 century, then the remedy books written by Angel Georgievich from the village of Piperevo, Strumica (1870), “Recepti za pravenje lekovi” written

by the vicar Joacim (1884) and the remedy books written in Mijacki dialect by the end of 19 century (Георгиевски,2008:345-346).

Treatment of folk physician-empiricists were unofficially divided in “all-knowers” and “specialists”. The former treated all diseases, and the latter only some or a group of diseases and were more successful in curing. This group also includes folk physicians engaged in treatment of smallpox and they were very efficient in the protection from smallpox. They grafted and transferred the pus from the diseased to the healthy people, usually children. “Vaccination” or “maya” was completely accepted by the folk as efficient protection from this infectious disease. The persons performing people’s “variolation” were known as “inoculators”, “grafters” or “vaccinators”.³

Kosta Cepekov, Marko Cepenkov’s father was known as a “specialist” for multiple diseases in Western Macedonia. As a successful doctor he enjoyed great reputation and confidence among the population.⁴ He was known as a “surgon”, “tosca” or “vaccinator”(Ристовски,1972:309-312). He was deserving for introduction of smallpox vaccine in 1845. He inoculated children and adults in Prilep, Kichevo, Struga and Ohrid. In 1846 he obtained a certificate from the Greek bishop for his successful combat with smallpox epidemics. It is worth mentioning that smallpox vaccination in Serbia commenced in 1881, while here, self-educated Konstantin, and it might be someone else before him, inoculated the population against this infectious disease (Алвацоски, Котески, Симитчиев,2001:72). Woman-vaccinators were also known who were very successful in their humanitarian work.

“Surgeons” were also mentioned among most known physician-empiricists in Macedonia in 19 century such as Angeli from Permet – Albania, who worked in Bitola in 1871, Mahmud Dejredji in Ohrid, Doncho

³ Grafting or potting, vaccination, inoculation as it was called had a long-term tradition in the Balkan and was known even before the invention of Jenner vaccine (1799). *“Inoculation is done by a group of old women engaged in this activity every autumn, in September, after the end of the big holidays. People discuss agree if any family member has to be protected against chickenpox, and around 15-16 persons gather. The old woman comes with a walnut shell full of the best sturdy type of chickenpox and asks which vein to open. She immediately opens the vein we show and penetrates it with a big needle, and as soon as you feel such a pain that is not stronger than a little injury, she injects a little bit of the chickenpox. After that she binds up with a piece of empty shell”*. (See more: Румелийски делници и празници от XVIII век, 1978: 240).

⁴ According to Marko Cepenkov’s writing, his father Kosta initially learned how to treat people from Adji Stojan from the village of Lazaropole. For three-four years, Kosta Cepenkov learned so well this craft that he became better than his teacher. He was known among the people as the poor’s doctor. (See more: Марко Цепенков, Одбрани текстови. Избор и коментар Гане Тодоровски,1974: 40-41).

Cilak in Veles, Kazim from the village of Djermo – Tetovo, Risto Trdjiokut in Maglensko and etc. (Перков, Ступар, 1990:6). It is also known that those physicians had a wide range of treatments to improve the people's health; however, there were cases where the application of folk medicine and people's lack of knowledge were often damageable.

“Women-doctors” known for their healing capacity worked in Veles in the second half of 19 century and first years of 20 century. Joana Lecha, Adji Lena (in someone's opinion she was a sister of Yordan Hadzhikonstantinov-Dzhinot), Baba Licka, and etc. (Стојановски, 1999:97).

In such living conditions and understanding of life, first graduated physicians emerged from some European medical faculties. Most of them returned to Macedonia to combat not only the diseases spread among the people but primitive perceptions.

Literature:

- Алваоски.К., Котески.Б., Симитчиев.Х. 2001. *Развојот на здравството во регионот на Прилеп, Крушево и Македонски Брод*. Друштво за наука и уметност. Прилеп. 72.
- Георгиевски. М. 2008. *Поглед кон ракописните лекарственици во Македонија*, Зборник на трудови. Штип. 344.
- Гушевска. Л. 2008. *Македонските лекарственици од XIX век*, Зборник: Македонија помеѓу Византискиот комонвелт и Европската унија. Скопје. 97.
- Етнологија на македонците*. 1996. Македонска академија на науките и уметностите (МАНУ). Скопје. 248.
- Светозаревик.Б./Покорни. 2010. *Здравството во Тетово и Тетовско во XIX и XX век*. Тетово. 7-8.
- Македонија во делата на странските патописци 1875-1878*. 2001. Подготвил: Александар Матковски. 273.
- Марко Цепенков. *Автобиографија. Материјали, литературни творби*. 1972. Редактор: Блаже Ристовски. Скопје. 309-312.
- Марко Цепенков. *Одбрани текстови*. 1974. Избор и коментар Гане Годоровски. Скопје. 40-41.
- Петков.Г., Ступар.Д. 1990. *Македонската емпирииска медицина и фармација во XIX век*. „Прилози“. № 2. Штип. 11-12.
- Румелијски делници и празници од XVIII век*. 1978. Отечествен фронт. Софија. 240.
- Стојановски. Н. 1999. *Здравствена култура во Велес и велешко од минатото до крајот на 20 век*. Друштво за наука и уметност (ДНУ)-Велес. Велес. 97.
- Цепенков. Марко. 1972. *Народни верувања. Детски игри*. Скопје. 129.

Periodicals:

Цариградски вестникъ. 1852. Цариградъ. 3.