

A criticism on the article "History of Bacterial Infection Diseases in Iran"

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Dear Editor

In year 12, issue 4 (October-November 2018) of the Iranian Journal of Medical Microbiology (IJMM), an article entitled "History of Bacterial Infection Diseases in Iran" on pages 230-238 was published by Akbar Mirsalehian and Mosayeb Dalvand as authors (1). Since the studies on medical history in medical research are very important, I request you to publish the following contents in one of the issues of the journal as a letter to the editor.

To review the history of common bacterial infectious diseases in Iran, the dear authors of the article reviewed the history of Trachoma as an infectious disease in a part of the study (1). Despite some important therapeutic interventions aimed at treating trachoma, historical sources and documents show that researchers have not carefully considered important aspects of trachoma.

1. The authors stated that the fight against trachoma in Iran was limited to Khuzestan province. It started in 1936 with the establishment of anti-trachoma clinics in the health center of the oil company (1). However, based on the evidence and available documents, the fight against trachoma started many years ago. Dr. Lesan al-Hakma stated that trachoma had been treated in ministerial and

government hospitals since the early fourteenth century. He prepared the first trachoma statistics in Iran in 1928, which Professor Chams presented at the International Organization against Trachoma (IOAT) in the Netherlands. In 1933, the book "regulations for the conditions of protection and treatment of eyelid bumps" was published by Dr. Colonie, the director of the general public health center (2).

This book contains concise instructions for physicians with no specialty in ophthalmology and trachoma treatment. This book emphasizes that physicians should refer patients with trachoma to a hospital or public or private institution, and especially to an ophthalmologist when the patients need more specialized and more accurate examinations (2). Besides, in the budget of 1933, 139419 Rials were considered for fighting against trachoma, and the general health organization of the country sent a special medicine for Trachoma to urban and health physicians (3).

The arrival of Professor Chams (1904-1996) in Iran in 1931 and the measures taken in the ophthalmology field in Iran had a great influence on the elimination of trachoma and caused the fight against trachoma to be followed up seriously (4). Professor Chams also

started the fight against trachoma in school health centers. In 1933, to prevent trachoma, he proposed to the Ministry of Education to divide schools into three categories of schools with healthy students, schools with trachoma patients, and schools with suspected students (5). Following the anti-trachoma project, the Ministry of Education implemented anti-trachoma classes in the summer of 1935. During that time, over 200 teachers from all over the country came to Tehran and participated in a special class on the issue of public health and methods for the prevention and treatment of trachoma (Figure 1) (5, 6).

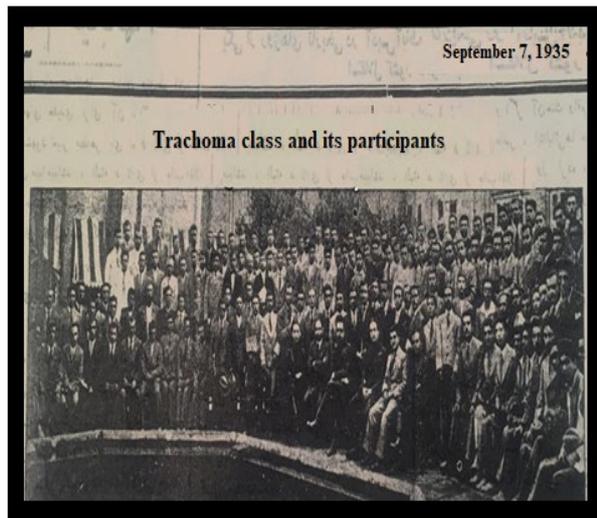


Figure 1. Participants in trachoma class in 1935

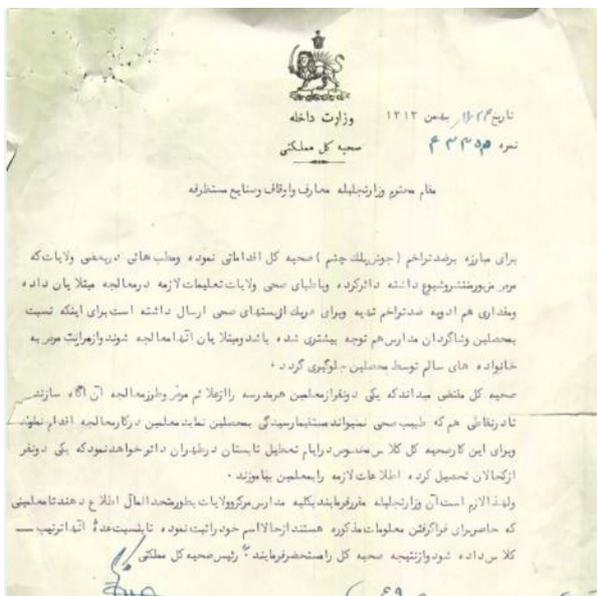


Figure 2. The letter of the head of the general health organization of the country to the Minister of Education regarding the fight against trachoma in 1934

After the establishment of the University of Tehran, scientific research on trachoma and the way to treat it began. Dr. Fathollah Farhi dedicated his medical

dissertation to trachoma treatment using electrocoagulation in 1934. His research could be considered one of the first scientific research on trachoma after establishing the Faculty of Medicine in Iran (5). Dr. Mohammad-Reza Meskoob wrote a dissertation on trachoma and its treatment in patients with syphilis (7). Dr. Nusratullah Bastan did valuable research by writing a dissertation on Trachoma and Eye neoplasm in 1936 (8).

2. The authors mention the research activities of Professor Chams' trachoma control programs in Dezful. However, it seems that most of the important scientific and research services of Professor Chams have been neglected in controlling trachoma. In this regard, the department of ophthalmology in schools, Farabi hospital, and the army ophthalmology department have been established. Besides, providing a six-month ophthalmology course for medical students, teaching ophthalmology at the medical school, establishing an ophthalmology department at the Dar al-Fonun School, and making correspondence with the World Ophthalmological Association to send foreign physicians to fight trachoma in Dezful in 1936 was of his considerable activities. Doing research and writing scientific articles related to trachoma, participating in international congresses, performing corneal grafting for the first time in Iran, and treating trachoma patients with diathermocoagulation are among the significant medical actions of Professor Chams in the years of the trachoma outbreak in Iran (9).

According to Professor Chams, trachoma and its treatment have been an interesting issue since 1926, and he has published numerous articles in scientific journals in Lyon, Paris, and Tehran in this regard (10). Prof. Chams and Prof. Jacques Rollet conducted studies on trachoma and diathermy at the ophthalmology conference of Lyon in France, the results of which were published in 1930 in the Scientific Journal. He began the treatment of trachoma using a particular treatment method called diathermocoagulation. Professor Chams conducted extensive scientific research on trachoma in 1950 for four years, along with other physicians at Farabi Hospital. Their study results were reported in 1954 at the International Congress of Paris, and its translation in Persian was published with the title "Treatment of Trachoma using Electrocoagulation method" (International Report of the Trachoma Congress, 1954, Paris) was published (10). In 1953, he worked in Tunisia with Professor Cuneo on the cause of trachoma, its inoculation in chimpanzees, and how it was inoculated (11). In his research, Dr. Fathollah Farhi referred to Professor Chams's comments on the diagnosis and treatment of trachoma, such as

treatment with, not cutting away the pimples caused by the Trachoma, how to examine the eye and no association between green discharge (mucus) and trachoma along with the opinions of other foreign ophthalmologists (5).

3. The authors, on page 236, wrote about how the Austrian ophthalmologist Dr. Anton Regner came to Iran and believed that he was captured in World War II along with some doctors and came to Iran after the end of the war. Based on the available documents and sources, after the end of World War II and at the beginning of construction in various countries, the issue of health was considered such as in Iran. Therefore, after the formation of the Social Services Organization in 1947, 30 German and Austrian physicians were invited and employed at the request of Iran to work in the Social Services Organization. Dr. Anton Regner, an Austrian ophthalmologist (1899-2000) along with other Austrian physicians, arrived in Iran on November 23, 1949, as part of the third expedition group (11, 12).

The next day, Dr. Regner spoke about the duties and the role they would play in treating patients on this mission. Dr. Ragner arrived in Dezful on January 17

with two German doctors from the Social Services Organization to fight trachoma after being trained in electrocoagulation therapy by Professor Chams, who was a member of the organization's central board and in charge of fighting trachoma at Farabi Hospital and fought against trachoma in this city until 1956. Ghaderpanah, in his research, stated that the captivity of Dr. Regner in the Soviet Union and his transfer to Iran is not true (11, 12).

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

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