

THE ORIGIN OF MD CERTIFICATES IN THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE

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Dear Editor

We read with great interest your Historical Focus paper entitled "About the First Available and Documented MD Certificate Delivered in the World: Ijazah" [1]. Although, it would seem that the origin of the MD Certificates has an older history according to the documents, the historical certificate presented in that paper could be the first available one in the history. Based on some historical studies, the oldest report of MD certificates dates back to the Ancient Persia during Sassanid Kingdom (224-637 CE) [2]. These certificates were issued by Chief of Physicians of the country who called "ēran drustbed" after a final surgical exam and documents were reviewed in a Medical Council [3]. Also, inspectors (Shode band) on behalf of the council supervised the regulations and performance of physicians and medical staffs in private sectors and public hospitals [4]. Later, these structures (Universities, Hospitals, MD Certificates, etc.) were copied into the Islamic world by immigration of physicians from Jundīshāpūr, the last survived ancient Persian scientific Centre to Baghdad, the capital of Islamic Caliphate during Abbasid era in 8th century CE [4, 5].

Turning now to the MD certificate presented by Younes Cherradi [1], there is a very important historical challenge. In the end of the document you can see the signs of the persons who proof this certificate (ويشهد الأطباء والحجّامون بأنّه مجاز) including

Abdillāh Ibn Ahmad ibn al-Baytār, Abu al-Abbas al-Ashshab al-Nabati, also known as Ibn al-Rumiya and Ibn al-Hajjaj al-Ishbīlī, etc. Ibn al-Baytār signed it as physician (بحضور الطبيب ابن البيطار) – means in presence of the physician Ibn al-Baytār) that means the importance of his scientific value as physician to approve the certificate. Diyā' al-Dīn Abū Muhammad al-Mālaqī, commonly known as Ibn al-Baytār is one of the greatest botanists in the Islamic civilization and Ibn al-Hajjaj al-Ishbīlī and Abu al-Abbas Ibn al-Rumiya were considered his teachers. Regarding the ideas of scholars, Ibn al-Baytār was born in 1197 CE in Andalusia and then leaved there via the North Africa to Egypt and Middle East when he was young. He finally died in Syria at 1248 CE [6, 7]. The date of approving this MD certificate is 1207 CE. It implies that he was only 10 years old, at that time! Another recognized difficulty with these dates appears because he leaved there in 1220 when he was about 23 years old. Hence, he was not famous as a great physician to be one of the persons who approve the MD certificates and degrees. So, we must admit that something must be mistaken.

Therefore, this document is worthy and significant, not only as the first available MD certificate but also because it can affect and change our knowledge about Ibn al-Baytār biography. However, as a first pass, the originality of the document should be proven. Unexpectedly, there is no reference number for this document kept in a museum. All in all, because of

great significance of this document, there is a really need to more evidences and works on the originality of it. If the originality of this document is approved, it can have a great impact to change our knowledge about Ibn al-Baytār life and shows current believe about his birth year and his youth era is completely incorrect. We strongly encourage the researchers in Morocco to work on the originality of the document that can shed light on the history of Ibn al-Baytār life.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST: None

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