

# Activities of the Royal Academy of Medicine of the Balearic Islands

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THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF MEDICINE is the oldest scientific institution of the Balearic Islands. It was founded in 1831 on the initiative of the physician Pere Castelló as the *Real Academia de Medicina y Cirugía de Palma de Mallorca* (Royal Academy of Medicine and Surgery of Palma de Mallorca), under the auspices of King Ferdinand VII of Spain (1784–1833). However, its history can be traced back even further, to the *Academia Médico Práctica de Mallorca*, founded in 1788. Like most academies throughout Europe, that first Academy provided a framework where new hypotheses were presented and discussed. In addition, it served to distinguish between surgeons and the more highly respected physicians. For the latter, the academies provided a means to ensure their exclusive privilege to issue prescriptions, protected within the intellectual aura of academic activities. Indeed, one of the petitions addressed by physicians to the king on the occasion of the Academy's foundation was to restrict pharmacies to filling only those prescriptions issued by members of the Academy.

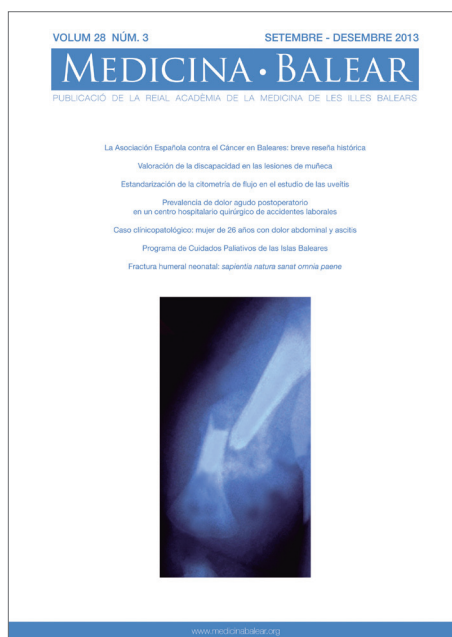
In 1999, the name of the Academy was changed to the *Real Acadèmia de Medicina de les Illes Balears* (Royal Academy of Medicine of the Balearic Islands). As its name indicates, it serves all of the Balearic Islands. The aims of the Academy are: (a) to promote knowledge of the health sciences, especially among physicians but also among the general public; (b) to implement biomedical advances within society; and (c) to advise the Government of the Balearic Islands on the prevention, maintenance and improvement of public health.

Over the years the Academy has carried out these aims by hosting scientific discussions and by acting as a source of information on advances and new developments related to medicine and surgery. Over the last 180 years, many of the most prestigious health science professionals of the Balearic Islands have held positions within the Academy, either as full members

or as corresponding members. Past illustrious members include Mateu J.B. Orfila (1787–1853), recognized worldwide as the father of toxicology and forensic medicine; Fernando Weyler Laviña (1808–1879), physician and writer; Bernat Riera Alemany (1874–1926), a military physician, and Emili Darder Cànaves (1895–1937), a physician who was also mayor of Palma de Mallorca and was executed by Franco's army during the Spanish civil war (1936–1939).

The Academy is an associate academy of the Institute of Spain (*Instituto de España*), which is located in Madrid and gathers academies from all over Spain. The associate academy category is granted only to the “academies of well known antiquity, fruitful, rich history, continuous activities in favor of academic purposes, and having achieved development of their academic mission.” In 1994, the

Academy was transferred from the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science to the Ministry (*Conselleria*) of Culture, Education and Sports of the Autonomous Government of the Balearic Islands, although the Ministry of Health and Consumer Affairs of the central Government in Madrid has played a decisive role in its maintenance. In 2013, the Academy was assigned to the Vice Presidency and Ministry of the Presidency of the Autonomous Government of the Balearic Islands.



**Fig. 1.** September–December 2013 issue of *Medicina Balear*, the official journal of the Reial Acadèmia de Medicina de les Illes Balears, published quarterly.

The purpose was to guarantee the institutional support necessary to promote the stability, independence and reputation of the Academy as an entity generating knowledge and its application to society. It also ensured support for research training and for outreach activities developed by the Academy.

The Academy has a historical archive of great value, which continues to grow through the acquisitions of documents of historical medical interest. In addition, every year the Academy awards several prizes for research in the health sciences. Since 1986, it has published the scientific journal *Medicina Balear*, which is released quarterly (Fig. 1) and has

recently been incorporated within the Digital Library and journal repository of the University of the Balearic Islands (UIB). In 2013, the Academy signed agreements with the UIB, the Institute for Catalan Studies (IEC, located in Barcelona) and the Balearic Society of Intensive Care and Coronary Units. Throughout the academic year, the Academy organizes scientific sessions and lectures, round tables, and book presentations aimed at contributing to public knowledge of important health science, at global improvement in the training of health professionals and at the transfer of knowledge to society. ■