

THE ACADEMY OF MEDICAL SCIENCES OF CATALONIA AND THE BALEARICS



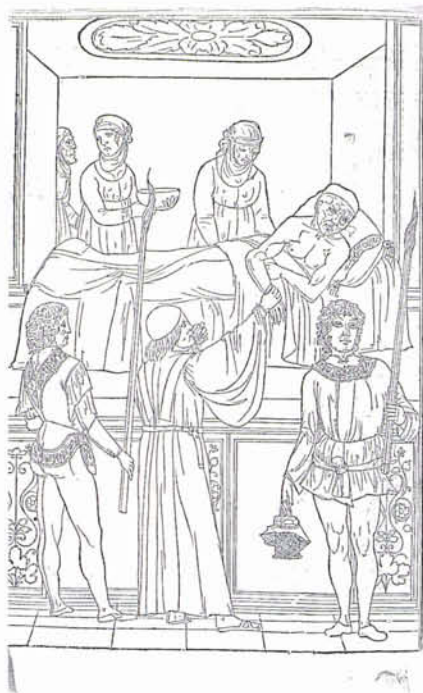
THE AIM OF THE ACMCB IS TO SERVE THE SOCIETY BY PROMOTING THE SPREAD OF THE MEDICAL SCIENCES AND OTHER SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES RELATING TO HEALTH.

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The original nucleus which, years later, was to give rise to the "Acadèmia de Ciències Mèdiques de Catalunya i de Balears" (ACMCB) was created in the city of Barcelona on 15th January 1872 on the initiative of a group of Medical students who were not satisfied with the insufficiency of the purely theoretical teaching of the Faculty of Medicine. The initiative was immediately supported by well known figures of the Catalan Medical and University worlds, and resulted in the creation of an institution which after a century of existence has remained extraordinarily active and faithful to its

roots and to its objectives, which are, as laid down in its statutes, "to serve the society in its geographical area by promoting the spread of the medical sciences and other scientific and cultural activities relating to health". The progressive developments and advances in medical and surgical specialities and other specialist subjects in the field of medical science has led to the creation of different specialist scientific societies which, while independently organised and run, remain attached to the trunk of the old Academy. At this moment there are 61 of these scientific societies, some of them made up of

health professionals other than doctors, like the Catalan Society of Clinical Pharmacy or the Catalano-Balearic Nursing Society. The other important fact which should be pointed out is that one of these societies is made up of students of the health sciences and, under the name "Joventuts Mèdiques de Catalunya i Balears" and with more than 2,000 members, is the most important association of medical students in Spain and at the same time represents the ACMB's permanent loyalty to its roots and a guarantee of its continuity in the future. The ACMB's peculiar structure and



constitution at the moment, unknown in other countries in the area, allows a wide range of specialist societies alongside a strong parent institution with more than 13,000 members, which allows an effective shared administration as well as other services, such as its own magazine and a very important library which at present has more than 80,000 books and subscribes to 678 regular publications. The present situation of the ACMCB, efficiently run and financially self-sufficient, is only possible through this particular form of co-operative organisation, something which has a long tradition in Catalonia.

Another distinctive aspect of the Acadèmia de Ciències Mèdiques de Catalunya i Balears is its geographic decentralization and its firm implantation throughout the regions of Catalonia and the Balearic Isles. At the present moment there are 18 affiliated societies in Catalonia, each with its own Board of Governors, and two more on the islands of Minorca and Ibiza, also with their own Boards, belonging to an important branch of the Academy in the islands: The "Acadèmia Mèdica Balear". To the extensive scientific activities of

the ACMCB, its scientific societies and its affiliated societies, we must add another kind of activity, always connected with the promotion of the health sciences, but also with the cultural and linguistic identity of Catalonia, which has needed a special defence, as is to be expected in the peculiar situation of the cultures of stateless nations, which tend to be oppressed by the dominant culture. This situation has made itself keenly felt in Catalonia during two long periods this century, the dictatorship of General Miguel Primo de Rivera (1923-1930) and that of General Francisco Franco (1939-1975). As an example of these activities there is the publication of a series of 33 books of medicine in Catalan (*Monografies Mèdiques*, 1970-1988), begun during the Franco dictatorship, the publication of three editions of a *Vocabulari Mèdic* (1974, 1979, 1987) and the preparation of a *Diccionari Enciclopèdic de Medicina*, to be published in 1990, prepared with the help of a number of institutions and containing a total of almost 60,000 entries, which will be the standard Catalan dictionary in the field of the Health Sciences.

Another of the ACMCB's important initiatives in this line of activity is the organisation of the Congresses of Catalan-Language Doctors and Biologists. These congresses periodically bring together Catalan-speaking professionals of the sciences of health and life. The first of these congresses was held in Barcelona in 1913, and the most recent, the 13th, in Andorra la Vella in 1988. The significance of the reaffirmation of a language and a culture has been maintained over the years and the continuity of these congresses has only been interrupted by the military dictatorships Spain has suffered during this century.

I think the characteristics and the importance of the ACMCB in Catalonia have been explained in these lines. As a summary of its development, it may be worthwhile quoting the words with which the ACMCB was awarded the Cross of Saint George by the Generalitat de Catalunya on 11th October 1983, "for having been, throughout its history of over a century, the backbone of the scientific activity of Catalan doctors and for having at all times shown its spirit of service to the country". ■