



First Pharmacopoeias in Spain

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Abstract

Pharmacopoeias in Spain were based on different presuppositions. One of these presuppositions was the separation of Medicine from Pharmacy, as well as the issue of official pharmaceutical standards. The main reason why pharmacopoeias appeared was because the authorities started to fix the prices of pharmaceutical products.

In this work we present an historic-scientific study of the different pharmacopoeias published in Spain. Their value lies in the significance these writings had in their time and in the important scientific information included in them because thanks to that information we have been able to understand the Spanish society of the 16th Century.

Introduction

Medicines and life appeared absolutely simultaneously. All living beings, and therefore, human beings try to solve their illnesses. Human beings try to increase their happiness and extent their existence by using different objects which come from the flora and fauna that intuitively, first and empirical or mythical-magic, after, they are all declared healthy.

This fact could be considered as an outline of the first pharmacopoeia, understood as the large therapeutic armoury which is born, transmitted and refined over the centuries, from the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, China and India, through the Hellenistic, Roman and Islamic world, to end in the Christian Western Europe. Before Islam, the words "physician" and "pharmacist" were synonyms since the same person, with more or less scientific and technical training, was responsible for practicing both professions.

During the Ninth Century in Baghdad, there was a first division of functions: some of them were specialists in charge of diagnosis and prognosis of diseases, physicians and others were responsible for the preparation of medicines. Later, this division would be observed in the recipes included in the traditional "*fiat secundum artem*."

From the moment this division occurred, books designed to encode the pharmacological activity of physicians and pharmacists were published. These publications tried to facilitate the prescriptive work of physicians and the preparation of remedies by the pharmacists, so that medicines used by patients in a given geopolitical territory were equivalent.

Now, we have clarified the term "pharmacopoeia": the "Book of the drugs, the text of health." It was in the Christian medieval Europe where during the Early Middle Ages, the true legal separation between Medicine and Pharmacy took place. This fact involved the prohibition of practicing both professions simultaneously. The edict was given by the Emperor Frederick II, King of the two Sicilies, and its name was "Magna Carta of Pharmacy", 1240. This separation started in Italy, then in France and Spain and finally it spread all over Europe. From that moment, for legal imperative, mainly accepted, the pharmacopoeias appeared in its modern meaning, that is, books devoted to encode the preparation of drugs, mandatory for prescribers and laboratory assistants in a given geopolitical region.

Methodology and Materials

This research is, to a large extent, an historical study in which the methodology has been the common one used in historiographical works. In this type of works, the literature search on issues of the pharmaceutical field will be systematic and laborious. In the literature search we will revise specialized texts dealing with pharmacopoeias, as well as with primary sources.



Figure 1
Nuovo receptario composto dal famosissimo Chollégio degli eximii Dottori della Arte et Medicina della Incitta citta di Firenze. Florencia, 1498

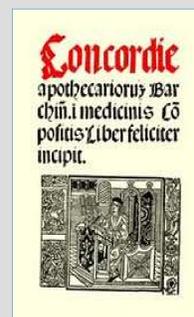


Figure 2
Concordia Barcinonensis
Barcelona, 1511



Figure 3
Officina Medicamentorum valenciana
Valencia, 1601



Figure 4
Dispensatorium Pharmacopolarum
Nurnberg, 1546

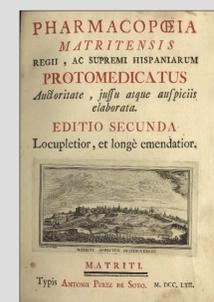


Figure 5
Pharmacopœia Matritensis
Madrid 1739



Figure 6
Officina Medicamentorum
1698

Results

- In Spain, the first pharmacopoeia appeared in the territory of the former Kingdom of Aragon, where professional union presence was more significant and the professional pharmacist activity was more regulated.

- The first pharmacopoeia, not limited to a single city or region was the *Pharmacopœia matritensis* in 1739.

- Catalan pharmacopoeias were attached to galenic scholasticism (*Concordia Pharmacopolarum Barchinonensium*, 1535), whose formulas came from Mesué.

Conclusions

- The pharmacopoeias are therefore official books preferably planned to use for doctors and pharmacists. They are part of the history of culture, related to everyday life, to the pain and the deepest desires of the human being to preserve and maintain health. In this respect, we can argue that pharmacopoeias are an essential part of the history of mankind.

- Without pharmacopoeias we can not understand the pharmacists profession since the essence of it are the medicines to preserve health. For this reason these books indirectly regulates the professional aspect.

- Their study allows us to know the official drug guidelines, the level of scientific knowledge at that time and the most common diseases.

Pharmacopoeia is a book containing a compilation of pharmaceutical products with their formulas and methods of preparation. The role of this book is to harmonize the professional pharmacist activity in a certain territory.

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