



УДК 94 (477) «11/13»

doi: 10.15421/171726

Medicine of Old Russian monasteries from the perspective of a modern medical practice

I.A. Melnychuk, A.A. Melnychuk

*melnychuk65@inbox.ru**Zhytomyr national agroecological university
7, Staryi Blvd St., Zhytomyr, 10008, Ukraine*

History of domestic medicine is indissolubly related to the history of the state and its political and social institutes among which Orthodox Church took a high position in times of Prince epoch. There is no doubt that in this period Church and its ramified structures executed a progressive role in the formation of the Kievan state.

One of the work directions, that were actively developing in church centers - monasteries, was medical care for population and maintenance of conditions for indoor treatment in monastic shelters for patients and invalids.

Till now not enough attention is paid to the research of this aspect of church activity not only from the side of explorers. Modern doctors, as a rule, are oriented on pre-revolution researches or works of soviet historians on medicine of the middle XX.

After the adoption of Christianity in 988, a new social layer of Church people appeared in Rus. From the very beginning, one of the important directions of monasteries' activities was service on curing the sick people, where folk medicine was losing its positions. Most well-educated monks-bookmen knew the bases of medical knowledge, attained by them during the protracted studies and self-education, some of them appeared to be talented doctors, prominent medics for their time. The monks of monastery came from the mountain of Afonasiy, where at the monastery of St. Afonasiy was the «hospital for the sake of sick», and brought medical knowledge».

Nykonivskyi Chronicle describes the foundation by Yefrem the network of medical institutions at the temples of the whole Metropolitan church. In fact, he created the prefiguration of the entire system of health protection which covered the significant territorial and human massifs. That was unprecedented in Rus. We consider that by tradition of building temples, which came from Byzantine Empire, most of them, if not all, were equipped in bath-houses and hospitals. Churches and monasteries were in every town, ten – in the capitals of principalities, hundreds – in Kyiv. This tradition of Middle Ages and New Time's fracture passed then to the cossack monasteries. Only after a bath-house, some surgical interferences were done – deletes of gall-stones, reduction of joints and vertebrae etc.

When we compare Church and witch-doctors, chiropractors and midwives, who used to base on millennial ordinary knowledge, it should be noted that the first one had a substantially prevailing financial and theoretical base due to the «tithe» set by prince authority. This significant sum of money from the income of the state was sent on acquiring and copying of the translated books, building of alms-houses, and «strannopriimnikh domiv» at temples.

Monastery or church hospital was actually inpatient department where a sick person was under day-and-night care of the specialist and educated junior personnel. Such conditions favorably differed from medical practice of magus-medicasters or secular «lichets» or «tsiriulnik» that usually consulted and cured at home.

Besides, monks-doctors accumulated rich practical experience at struggle with dangerous illnesses and infections, curing wounds and seriously ill persons. The specialization of monastery doctors and names of the most respectful of them are notified in ancient documents.

So, it was exactly monastery hospital that was founded by Orthodox Church and where doctors worked. Later, the rapid growth of Old Russian cities, their acquisition of German law contributed to spreading of secular medicine, formation of workshops for doctors and tsiriulniks, opening of pharmacies and educational-medical establishments in Lviv, Kyiv and other capitals of Ukraine/Rus. But alongside there was gratuitous, developed and full of practical experience medical branch. Coexistence of both types of medical aids was not a problem but addition to each other.

Keywords: Church; Kievan Rus; monastic medicine; secular medicine

Цитування даної статті: Melnychuk I.A., Melnychuk A.A. Medicine of Old Russian monasteries from the perspective of a modern medical practice / I.A. Melnychuk, A.A. Melnychuk // Науково-теоретичний альманах «Грані». – 2017. – Т. 20. – № 2(142). – С. 61-65.

Citation of this article: Melnychuk, I.A., Melnychuk, A.A., 2017. Medicine of Old Russian monasteries from the perspective of a modern medical practice. Scientific and theoretical almanac «Grani» 20; 2(142), 61-65. doi:10.15421/171726 (in English).

Peer-reviewed; approved and placed: 22.12.2016

Медицина давньоруських монастирів з точки зору сучасної лікувальної практики

І. А. Мельничук, А. О. Мельничук
melnichuk65@inbox.ru

*Житомирський національний агроекологічний університет
10008, Житомир, вул. Старий бульвар, 7*

Дається спроба на основі давньоруських літописних та літературних джерел провести аналіз досягнень монастирської медицини Княжої доби.

Наводиться фактичний матеріал щодо існування на Русі доволі розгалуженої для свого часу мережі лікувальних установ, створених спільними зусиллями церковної та світської влади. Подається порівняльний аналіз доступності та ефективності лікувальної практики руського знахаря, світського медика та монастирського лічця. Із використанням джерел давньоруського періоду проводиться думка про фахову спеціалізацію монастирських лічців, їх високу для свого часу кваліфікацію.

Робиться висновок про ефективність монастирської медицини з точки зору сучасної лікувальної практики.

Ключові слова: Церква; Київська Русь; монастирська медицина; світська медицина

Медицина древнерусских монастырей с точки зрения современной лечебной практики

И. А. Мельничук, А. А. Мельничук
melnichuk65@inbox.ru

*Житомирский национальный агроэкологический университет
10008, Житомир, ул. Старый бульвар, 7*

Дается попытка на основе древнерусских летописных и литературных источников провести анализ достижений монастырской медицины Княжеского периода.

Приводится фактический материал о существовании на Руси довольно разветвленной для своего времени сети лечебных учреждений, созданных совместными усилиями церковной и светской власти. Подается сравнительный анализ доступности и эффективности лечебной практики русьского знахаря, светского медика и монастырского лечца. С использованием источников древнерусского периода проводится мысль о профессиональной специализации монастырских лечцов, их высокой для своего времени квалификации.

Делается вывод об эффективности монастырской медицины с точки зрения современной лечебной практики.

Ключевые слова: Церковь; Киевская Русь; монастырская медицина; светская медицина

Actuality of the topic. History of domestic medicine is indissolubly related to the history of the state and its political and social institutes among which orthodox Church took a high position in times of Prince epoch. There is no doubt that in this period Church and its ramified structures executed a progressive role in the formation of the Kievan state. One of the work directions, that were actively developing in church centers - monasteries, was medical care for population and maintenance of conditions for indoor treatment in monastic shelters for patients and invalids.

Stage of the problem's development. We want to place on record that till now not enough attention is paid to the research of this aspect of churches' activity not only from the side of modern professional historians, but also from doctors, historians of Church, religious scholars and culture experts. In soviet times such monographs would not have look-in due to the uneasy relationship between the state and church. Therefore, modern doctors are mainly oriented on pre-revolution researches or works of soviet historians on medicine of the middle of the XXth century.

Until now, one of the most complete explorations on history of medicine of the Prince epoch is the survey work of S. Kovner, written in the previous century [1], where a considerable part of text lights up popular on

that day questions of medieval witchcraft and mysticism. The monograph by F.L. German also attracts attention [2]. Such highly respected doctors-historians of medicine as V.F. Demych, S.A. Verhratskyi [3], P.Y. Zabludovskiy[4], O.A. Grando[5], R.Y. Kavetskyi and K.P. Balytskyi [6], P.P. Chubynskyi and others, has written famous researches which contain just a few paragraphs dedicated to monastic medicine (by the way, most of the mentioned works about medicine are written by Ukrainian authors).

For the sake of objectivity it should be underlined that continuous wars and fires in cities and temples which had shook off Ukraine during ages and had destroyed monastic archives, left us very little sources. Separate mentions from the Chronicle, Lives of saints and authorship sources of contemporaries-foreign researchers don't give the complete picture of the issue; however, they give an opportunity to systematize the achievements of the monastic medicine of that epoch. The situation became better lately, some meaningful articles of rather outstanding professors-medics appeared in professional Internet-editions [7; 8]. But a separate analysis of the church medicine acquisitions from the perspective of modern medical practice has never been conducted thoroughly on monographic level.

The aim of the article is to try to conduct the analysis of achievements of the Prince epoch monastic medi-

cine from a modern medical perspective on the basis of the Old Russian chronicle and church literary sources.

Materials and methods. Comparative historical, concrete historical and retrospective methods together with the study of the row of available chronicle and church literary sources have been used for conducting the professional analysis of achievements of Kievan Rus monastic medicine from the perspective of modern medical practice.

Main material. Acceptance of Christianity and foundation of the Kievan Metropolitan Rus became a shove to comprehensive development of the young state – Kievan Rus. The new social layer of Church people appeared. It was filled with immigrants from Byzantium and other already christened South Slavic lands – Greeks, Bulgarians, Macedonians and Serbians. An orthodox clergy and monks-enlighteners brought rich Byzantium culture which was based on an ancient inheritance. Together with these people the written language and education, Christian and ancient foreign literature in translation, world history, architecture and medicine came to Rus.

With foundation of the Pecherskyi monastery, and then monastery and Lavra monastery, the training of own personnel began in order to meet growing necessities of state and church building. From the start of foundation, one of important directions of monasteries' activities was service on curing the sick people, where folk medicine was losing its positions.

Most well-educated monks-bookmen knew the bases of medical knowledge, attained by them during the protracted studies and self-education, some of them appeared to be talented doctors, prominent medics for their time. According to O.Y. Bobrov Kievo-pecherskiy monastery played a large role in monastic medicine development (the XIth century). The monks of monastery came from the mountain of Afonassii, where at the monastery of St. Afonassii was the «hospital for the sake of sick», and brought medical knowledge»[7] (Auth.transl.).

Pecherskiy Paterik carried to us the names of monastery devotees. Narration 8 of the Paterik contains datum «About life of Saint Reverend Father Feodosii, Pecherskii Father Superior» [9, p.15-47], narration 27 «About Saint and blessed Reverend Agapit, doctor gratuitous» [9, c.71-74]. The Reverend Antonii and his «gift of healing and curing», Damian, St. Alipii, «Virmenlichets», Agapit–Pecherskii, Pymen Postnyk glorified the monastery till the end of times. O. Bobrov underlines that Pecherskii monastery was the first, but not the only one church medical institution: «Hospitals in Rus were functioning by other monasteries. Thus, according to Nykonivskyi Chronicle, in the XI century (1091) Metropolitan Yefrem established a bathing building and hospitals where people could consult the doctors at no charge. Prince Chernigivskii Mykola Davydovych, called Sviatosha, (XII century) built medical monastery in Kyiv» [7].

Nykonivskyi Chronicle describes the foundation of the network of medical establishments at the temples of the whole Metropolitan church by Yefrem. In fact, he created the prefiguration of the entire system of health protection which covered significant territorial and hu-

man massifs, unprecedented in Rus: «[Metropolitan Yefrem]...be zhe togda zdania mnoga vozdvigl: dokonchav tserkvu sviatago arhangela Mykhaila, i zalozhy tserkov kameny na vorotah gradnyh...druguiu tserkov i stroeniie bannoe, i vracheve i bolnitsy, vsem prikhodishchim bezmezdno vrachevaniie, takozhe i v Militine v svoiem grade ustroi, i po inym svoim gradom mitropol'skim, izhe sut i so uezdy, i s volostmy, i s sely; se zhe ne byst'prezhde v Rusi» [10, p.116].

It has been considered that by tradition of building temples, which came from Byzantine Empire, most of them, if not all, were equipped in bath-houses and hospitals. Churches and monasteries were in every town, ten – in the capitals of principalities, hundreds – in Kyiv. This tradition on the fracture of the Middle Ages and New Time was transferred then to the cossack monasteries. Only after a bath-house, some surgical interferences were done– deletes of gall-stones, reduction of joints and vertebrae etc. Bath-houses with the special health rituals (with besoms made of healthful trees), beer or kvass, bathing in icy water had mighty therapeutic function in the slavonic world in Middle Ages and even nowadays such methods comprehensively strengthen and stimulate all systems of organism.

When we compare Church and witch-doctors, chiropractors and midwives, who used to base on millennial ordinary knowledge, it should be noted that the first one had a substantially prevailing financial and theoretical base because the «tithe» set by prince authority. This significant sum of money from the income of the state was sent on acquiring and copying of the translated books, building of alms-houses, and «strannopriimnikh domiv» at temples. Chronologically, the first translated source which is saved for today is the Manuscript of the XV century «Galinovo na Ipokratye» (Galen's comments on Hippocrates' work) which was found in Kyrilo-Bilozerskyi monastery [4, p.195]. It presupposes the existence of literature of such type in the libraries of other church centers.

Monastery or church hospital was actually an inpatient department where a sick person was under day-and-night care of the specialist and educated junior personnel. Such conditions favorably differed from medical practice of magus-medicasters or secular «lichets» or «tsiriulnik» that usually consulted and cured at home. Besides, monks-doctors accumulated rich practical experience at their struggles with dangerous illnesses and infections, curing wounds and seriously ill persons.

Centuries should pass before the discovery of viral and bacterial spreading of infection diseases, but monks' experience told them not to take clothes and presents from the sick person and his relatives, that is witnessed from the references of the medical practice of pecherski monks in Kievo-Pecherskii Pateryk and Church Mnaion. Usually, Christian moral and ethics played an important role among monks; furthermore practical needs dictated church doctors to send rich gifts for tenement or indigents' expenditure. We can't affirm that any kind of disinfection was conducted but, at least, life of non-numerical real professionals was in safety. It's not accidental that Ahapit knew the symptoms and proceeding of the disease of Prince Iziaslav and ignored the invitation

to prince palace, sending him the ointment which quickly and miraculously healed the ill [9, p.72].

This bears evidence of a considerable therapeutic and practical experience of Ahapit, who managed to select an exact mixture of ingredients for treating exactly the special disease. At the same time, such acts raised the authority of Church among the population in general and such prominent monastery doctors as Antonii and his scholar Ahapit in particular.

Their names are famous today due to Pecherska Community's glory, also they are fixed in ancient sources but it's thought that in every Kievan-Rus monastery there were its own medical authorities. Furthermore, such unpaid practice differed from the considerable money or payment in-kind which was required by the representatives of secular medicine. The description of Saint Kozma and Damian's miracles gives an idea about medicinal methods of monastery lichts (using herb waters or «hell» of cedar oil, putting raw meat on a sore place, rubbing etc.), all these are mentioned in Old Rus references «Large menaion Chetii» [11].

In the Patryk it's written about the Reverend Antonii: «Yako zhe bo on, velikii, pokryvav svoiu sviatost, bolnya isceliashaot svoieaiadi, miiasia tem vrachevna zeliie podava, i tako zdravi bivahu molitvoiu ego» [12, p. 93]. As can be seen, Antonii combined medication («potion») with psychotherapy (pray).

In monks' practice there were cases of «miraculous healing» by God's Word, that is fixed in ancient sources. Modern medicine has recently started to fix and accumulate the statistics of successful therapeutic and psychotherapy procedure, when a trained specialist cures only by word, intonation and mental approach. The organism of the sick person who certainly believes in doctor's authority can have additional reserves of immune system, which cause the positive dynamics of disease passing. Monks knew such techniques completely, the therapeutic effect was strengthened by the patient's repetition of special prays «for the health» or incantations, which worked as self-hypnosis.

In the narration of Kyivo-Pecherskyi Pateryk there is a reference about Feodosii who had organized hospitals in monastery in 1060-1070. It's mentioned that seriously ill people, who were brought to the monastery had to cut their hair to become monks that induced them to overcome the disease. Also it helped the monastery hospitals (in this case Pymen) to accumulate valuable experience in difficult cases study and treat the illness in case of increased complexity, that is very important in medicine: «In zhe tam yakyis takozh khvoryi, pryneenyi byst' v pecheru I postryzhenyi; I mnisi zh na te, shco vlashtuvalobolnym sluzhyty, vzemshe I siogo, nesosha yogo K.Piminova» [12, p.181].

Damian-presviter specialized in curing children: «And when somebody brought a sick child to Saint Theodosii, it didn't matter what was the disease, he told Damian to pray near the ill person. And he prayed and

greased with sacred oil. And cured were those who came to him » [9, p. 55].

Even now, secular medicine doesn't know the exact ingredients of healing oils which were used in monastery's medical practice, but no doubts that external treating with the extracts of medical plants is one of the main methods of modern pediatrics of respiratory infections, skin diseases, burns, skin irritations, intertrigo, etc. Combination of oral and external use of plant oils can make a positive effect on disease passing.

Ukrainian author Y. Grytsak in her work outlines out the world-view point of the monastery doctor of Prince Epoch, which by its imperatives is close to world-view of every devoted doctor today: «Starting with XII century monastery doctors had to keep to medicinal moral. For example, a doctor was required to show self-sacrifice, kind-heartedness, humaneness, attention to everybody, who sought medical advice. He couldn't refuse a personal participation in the process of curing, sometimes doing dirty tasks. Church Hippocratic oath presupposed doctor to be tolerant and sensitive to «madmen». The question about payment, pride and well-being was not under discussion. As representatives of monastery medicine alienated everything concerning their own personality, they were highly respected among people. Many doctors were called saint after death»[13].

An example of medical devotion is the picture of Agapit, given in the Peteryk: «blessed Agapit, imitating that Old, helped sick people. But when somebody from the brethren became sick he left his room..., came to ill brother and served him: raised and laid, carried on hands, fed with dish made of potion. So the sick recovered thanks to his prayers. If the illness continued it meant that God had willed it so to increase faith and prayer. In such case blessed Agapit persistently stayed with the sick, begging God for health to the ill person. And for the reason that God gave him gift of healing people called him Doctor»[9, p.71-72].

In the most ancient list of Volodymyr's statute written in Novgorod at the end of the XIIIth century, such «church people» are mentioned: lichts, choking man, a blind man, lame man, workers of monastery hospitals, hotels, travelers: these people are «churchy». Both such people and institutions were entrusted to high priests. It's proved by «The book stupinna of royal genealogy»[8, p. 108-109; 14, p.118-119].

Conclusions. So, it was exactly monastery hospital that was founded by the Orthodox Church and where doctors worked. Later, the rapid growth of Old Russian cities, their acquisition of German law contributed to spreading of secular medicine, formation of workshops for doctors and tsyriulnyks, opening of pharmacies and educational-medicinal establishments in Lviv, Kyiv and other capitals of Ukraine/Rus. But alongside there was gratuitous, developed and full of practical experience medical branch. Coexistence of both types of medical aids was not a problem but addition to each other.

БІБЛІОГРАФІЧНІ ПОСИЛАННЯ:

1. Ковнер С. История средневековой медицины / С. Ковнер. – Киев: Тип. Императорского университета Св. Владимира, 1893 г. – 648 с.
2. Герман Ф. Л. Врачебный быт допетровской Руси. – Харьков, 1891.
3. Верхратський С. А. Історія медицини / С. А. Верхратський // 2-е вид., перероб. і доп. – К.: Вища школа, 1974. – 335 с.: іл.
4. Верхратський С. А., Заблудовський П. Ю. Історія медицини / С. А. Верхратський, П. Ю. Заблудовський. – К.: Вища школа, 1991. – 431 с.
5. Актуальные вопросы истории медицины / Редколлегия: Б. П. Крыштопа, А. А. Грандо, К. Ф. ДуPLENKO и др. – К.: Здоров'я, 1978. – 192 с.
6. Кавецкий Р. Е., Балицкий К. П. У истоков отечественной медицины. – К.: Изд-во АН УССР, 1954. – 104 с.
7. Бобров О. Е. Монастырская и светская медицина Древней Руси: антагонизм или сотрудничество? / О. Е. Бобров. – 2009. [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: http://medobzor.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=934&Itemid=179
8. Мирский М. Б. Медицина в средние века на Руси / М. Б. Мирский. – Вопросы истории, 2000, № 11-12. – С. 106-117.
9. Києво-Печерський Патерик / Джерела християнського Сходу. – Вип. 10. – Львів: Монастир Свято-Іванівська Лавра, «Свічадо», 2007. – 103 с.
10. ПСРЛ. – Т. 9. – СПб., 1862. – С. 116.
11. Великие Минеи Четии / Ноябрь 1-2. – СПб., 1897. – С. 6-43; Великие Минеи Четии / Октябрь 4-18. – СПб., 1874. – С. 1060-1061, 1107.
12. Патерик Киевского Печерского монастыря. – СПб., 1911. – 230 с.
13. Грицак Елена. Популярная история медицины / Елена Грицак. – [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: <http://www.e-reading.co.uk/book.php?book=83377>
14. ПСРЛ. – Т. 21, ч. 1. – СПб., 1908. – С. 118-119.

REFERENCES:

1. Kovner, S., 1893. Istorija srednevekovoy meditsiny [History of medieval medicine]. 648. Tip. Imperatorskogo universiteta Sv. Vladimira, Kyiv (in Russian)
2. German, F. L., 1891. Vrachebnyy byit dopetrovskoy Rusi [The medical life of pre-Petrine Rus] (in Russian)
3. Verkhratskiy, S. A., 1974. Istorii medytyny [History of medicine]. 335. Vyscha shkola, Kiev (in Ukrainian)
4. Verkhratskiy, S. A., Zabludovskiy, P. Yu., 1991. Istorii medytyny [History of medicine]. 431. Vyscha shkola, Kiev (in Ukrainian)
5. Kryshchtopa, B. P., Grando, A. A., Duplenko, K. F., 1978. Aktualnye voprosy istorii meditsiny [Actual questions of the history of medicine]. 192. Zdorov'ya, Kiev (in Russian)
6. Kavetskiy, R. E., Balitskiy, K. P., 1954. U istokov otechestvennoy meditsiny [At the origins of domestic medicine]. 104. Izd-vo AN USSR, Kiev (in Russian)
7. Bobrov, O. E., 2009. Monastyrskaya i svetskaya meditsina Drevney Rusi: antagonizm ili sotrudnichestvo? [Monastic and secular medicine of Ancient Russia: antagonism or cooperation?]. Access: http://medobzor.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=934&Itemid=179 (in Russian)
8. Mirskiy, M. B. Meditsina v srednie veka na Rusi [Medicine in the Middle Ages in Russia]. (in Russian)
9. Kyievo-Pecherskiy Paterik [Kievo-Pechersky Paterik]. 2007. Dzherela khrystyianskoho Skhodu 10, 103. Monastyr Sviato-Ivanivska Lavra, «Svichado», Lviv (in Ukrainian)
10. PSRL [PSRL]. 1862. Vol. 9, 116. SPb. (in Russian)
11. Velikie Minei CHetii [Great Menae of Chetia]. 1897. Noyabr' 1-2, 6-43. SPb.; Velikie Minei CHetii [Great Menae of Chetia]. 1874. Oktyabr' 4-18, 1060-1061, 1107. SPb. (in Russian)
12. Paterik Kievskogo Pecherskogo monastyrya [Paterik of the Kiev Pechersky Monastery]. 1911. 230. SPb. (in Russian)
13. Gritsak, Elena. Populyarnaya istoriya meditsiny [Popular history of medicine]. Access: <http://www.e-reading.co.uk/book.php?book=83377> (in Russian)
14. PSRL [PSRL]. 1908. Vol. 21, part 1, 118-119. SPb. (in Russian)