

LETTER TO EDITOR

A Critique of the Article “Trachoma in Iran: From Past to the End of Twentieth Century”

Dear Editor,

In Volume 7, Issue 1 (February 2018, pp. 51-60) of the Research on the History of Medicine Journal, an article entitled “*Trachoma in Iran: From Past to the End of Twentieth Century*” was published by Dr. Masoud Kasiri (Kasiri, 2018, pp. 51-60). Owing to the importance of medical history studies in medical research, please publish the following points in one of the journal’s issues as a letter to the editor.

1. The author of the article, after studying the history of trachoma from antiquity and Islamic civilization to the history of combating trachoma in the post-constitutional period in Iran, referred to the efforts of Professor Chams to prevent and treat this disease. The author then stated that with the efforts of his medical team, trachoma in the southern regions of Iran was almost eradicated (Kasiri, 2018, p. 57). However, the evidence shows that despite the efforts of Iranian and foreign physicians, until many years later, trachoma was still one of the most common eye diseases in southern Iran. The Department of Education and Endowments of the

Jamal Rezaei Orimi^{1, 2}

1- MSc, Traditional and Complementary Medicine Research Center, Arak University of Medical Sciences, Arak, Iran

2- Translational Ophthalmology Research Center, Farabi Eye Hospital, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

Correspondence:

Jamal Rezaei Orimi

MSc, Traditional and Complementary Medicine Research Center, Arak University of Medical Sciences, Arak, Iran; Translational Ophthalmology Research Center, Farabi Eye Hospital, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran.

rezaei.history93@gmail.com

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southern ports reported that more than half of the students had trachoma, and no medicine was available at the end of 1937. In 1938, most of the residents of Dezful suffered from trachoma, and a shortage of ophthalmologists (Provide development and completion of cultural enterprises in Dezful, 1939, pp. 5-7). During Professor Chams' visit to Dezful in March 1948, about 95% of the residents had trachoma, and 25% became blind due to its complications (Afsharianzadeh, 2021, pp. 162-172).

2. In the next part of the article, the author writes about the training courses held for the prevention and treatment of trachoma, along with holding trachoma workshops by ophthalmologists, such as Professor Chams for teachers in 1935 saying that: "... to find new evidence of general measures or conducting epidemiological research on the disease of trachoma until 1959 is inconclusive." (Kasiri, 2018, p. 58). Although the author has failed to find evidence, significant steps have been taken in subsequent years. Ophthalmology knowledge in Iran has grown with the establishment of the Faculty of Medicine, the construction of Farabi Hospital, the establishment of the Association for Combating Trachoma, the establishment of the Institute of Ophthalmology, and the reopening of the Anti-Trachoma Clinic, playing an important role in combating trachoma in later years (Rostaei, 2003, p. 131). In 1948, after conducting epidemiological studies, the main fight against trachoma in Dezful was started by the Social Service Organization with the presence of foreign and Iranian physicians and satisfactory results were obtained (Detailed flow of the fight against trachoma in Dezful, 1952, pp. 1-38). At the same time, physicians, such as Professor Chams, Dr. Bastan, and Dr. Colonie, together with other physicians, conducted some scientific research and epidemiological studies on trachoma in 1950 for four years, the results of which were reported in 1954 at the International Congress of Paris (Chams, 1954, pp. 1-7). Dr. Fathollah Farhi wrote his medical dissertation on trachoma and its treatment by coagulation with electricity (1934) and Dr. Mohammad Reza Maskoub wrote his dissertation on trachoma and its treatment in syphilis (1937). Dr. Nusratullah Bastan began his research with the treatise on Trachoma (1936) and Oram Moltahmeh (1936). Professor Chams, together with Dr. Mahmoud Shervin, published works entitled Trachoma virus (1943), Symptoms of trachoma (1946), Trachoma in schools, and how to prevent it (1947), The treatise on the new treatment of trachoma (1955) by Mohammad Ali Piroozi and the article entitled, Classification of trachoma (1956) by Hamid Mohsenin and Sohrab Darogar. All this testifies that his scientific research has played an important role in eradicating and combating this disease in later years. (Afsharianzadeh, 2021, pp. 162-172; Chams, 1954, pp. 1-7; Farahi, 1934, p. 3)

3. In one section of the article, the author focuses on the life of Professor Mohammad Gholi Chams, the father of ophthalmology in Iran, and mentions some of the services he performed, including the establishment of the Army Ophthalmology and the Dar al-Fonun School, and his correspondence with the World Ophthalmological Association, asking them to send foreign physicians to fight trachoma. (Kasiri, 2018, p. 57) However, it seems that most of the important scientific and research services of Professor Chams in the fight against trachoma have been neglected. Accordingly, the establishment of school ophthalmology, the establishment of Farabi Hospital, the approval of six-month ophthalmology training for medical students, teaching ophthalmology in the medical school, writing scientific articles, participating in international congresses, and also performing corneal transplantation for the first time in Iran and Diathermy coagulation treatment in trachoma patients exhibit some of his activities undertaken in the early years of his arrival



in Iran (Chams, 2015, pp. 865-867).

4. The author concludes that “trachoma was not the main cause of blindness in Iran at the beginning of the twentieth century ...” (Kasiri, 2018, p. 60). According to the Trachoma Statistics of 1928 prepared by Dr. Lesan al-Hakma and presented by Professor Chams at the International Trachoma Congress of the Netherlands, about 33.2% of the population of Iran had trachoma, and the main cause of the blindness of 40% of the blind in Iran (No. 12450) was trachoma (Figure 1) (Farahi, 1934, p. 8). It seems that due to the widespread prevalence of trachoma in Iran, it was the most common cause of blindness.

جدول احصائیه تراخم وعده کورهائی که از تراخم وامراض مختلفه دیگر حاصل شده است (سال ۱۹۲۸ مسیحی)

مشاهدات	کورهائی که در اثر تراخمند	عده مبتلایان به تراخم	نسبت مبتلایان تراخم در صد نفر	ساکنین	ایالات و شهرهای ایران
کورهای بواسطه سیفیس (شمورء صب بصری) ورمدهای چرکی ورمدهای در اثر سرخچه و آبله و آب سبز بر حسب احصائیه محکمه کتالی آقای دکتر لسان شمس و مریشخانه هائی که در آن کار میکرده اند «مریشخانه دولتی و وزیری و شیر و خورشید سرخ»	۱۲۳۷ ۱۸۷۵ ۲۲۵۰ ۱۸۷۵ ۵۶۲ ۱۰۰۰ ۲۲۵۰ ۴۵۰ ۴۵۰	۴۱۲۰۰۰ ۶۲۵۰۰۰ ۷۵۰۰۰۰ ۶۲۵۰۰۰ ۱۸۷۰۰۰ ۵۰۰۰۰۰ ۷۵۰۰۰۰ ۱۵۰۰۰۰ ۱۵۰۰۰۰	۰/۱۵ ۰/۵۰ ۰/۵۰ ۰/۵۰ ۰/۱۵ ۰/۵۰ ۰/۵۰ ۰/۱۵ ۰/۱۵	۲۷۵۰۰۰۰ ۱۲۵۰۰۰۰ ۱۵۰۰۰۰۰ ۱۲۵۰۰۰۰ ۱۲۵۰۰۰۰ ۱۰۰۰۰۰۰ ۱۵۰۰۰۰۰ ۱۰۰۰۰۰۰ ۱۰۰۰۰۰۰	آذربایجان خراسان و سیستان فارس و بنادر کرمان و بلوچستان اصفهان و بختیاری کرمانشاهان و کردستان لرستان و خوزستان (*) طهران و عراق مازندران و گیلان
۱۸۶۷۵	۱۲۴۵۰	۴۱۵۰۰۰۰		۱۲۵۰۰۰۰۰	جمع

(*) احصائیه تراخم در شوشتر و دزفول هشتاد تا نود در صد است.

Figure 1. A copy of the Frequency of the blind in Iran in 1928

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