

Editorial

In this issue, *Medicina Historica* presents various medical experiences from the past, spanning distant times and places. With critical meticulousness, the authors who participated in the creation of this issue have still today demonstrated that the history of medicine must spread internationally.

The authors' meticulous archival research methods are evident in their study of trial documents regarding the Val Poschiavo between 1631-1753 discovering unique medical issues, such as the persecution of nurses accused of witchcraft in the 1600s and 1700s.

The spread of major infectious diseases is another area of interest for our Journal and this issue in particular focuses on colonialism's role in introducing foreign bacilli to populations. An intriguing case is that of the smallpox epidemic in Nias Island, Indonesia, during the Dutch colonial period. The virus was introduced through commercial routes on the west coast of Sumatra, leading to significant economic damage and high mortality rates. To combat the outbreak, the Dutch colonial government implemented a vaccination program aimed at remedying a truly worrying situation for the local population. This number of *Medicina Historica* also delves into ancient medical knowledge and remedies against parasites from the Far East. Chinese documents from the 2nd century BC describe the first parasites known to afflict human health, with a medical theory detailing nine worms responsible for various diseases.

The history of plastic surgery is another notable topic of this issue and particularly attentive to the development of the discipline since the nineteenth century with developments from L. Ollier's experimental work to W. Macewen's operation in 1881 laying the foundation for this medical science branch in the following decades. Additionally, a section on paleopathology features interesting cases from Italy, particularly the remains of nobles housed in the Neapolitan Basilica of Saint Domenico Maggiore (15-17th centuries). Three out of five cases of soft tissue tumours known in paleopathology worldwide are documented in this Italian series, including the first examples of breast cancer diagnoses in ancient human remains supported by archival sources and paleopathological investigations. This way of dealing with historical medical research is a symbol of pride in the discipline itself. The fact of being able to compare the human sample with the written sources offers us the possibility of really investigating the medical knowledge of the time in depth. Another paleopathological study presents a collection of cardiac remains, sourced from archaeological and historical contexts across various periods and regions. These preparations have undergone a natural preservation process, and in some cases, an intentional one, to emphasise the individual significance of the heart. The authors conduct an analysis of the pathological features, or lack thereof, present in each specimen. They emphasise the scientific and medical value that can be derived from the study of the organic remains sourced from such contexts.

In terms of bioethics, *Medicina Historica* presents two articles. The first one discusses the recent reform of the Ethics Committees in Italy, with a particular focus on the complex issue of end-of-life decisions. The ethical considerations associated with suffering and pain are still a highly contentious and unresolved matter in the fields of health and care professions. Beginning with a historical and conceptual overview of Ethics Committees, the article provides an outline of relevant legislation and its evolution in relation to assisted suicide. The second one delves into the field of "Neuroethics", which concerns the relationship between the brain and moral decision-making. This discipline has arisen from the intersection of scientific and philosophical thought and has a long and rich history.

I must acknowledge with great pride that in recent times *Medicina Historica* has received many articles from all over the world and this only increases awareness regarding the fact that even the History of Medicine, in its three main facets, historical, paleopathological and bioethical, can have a single international language.