

Editorial

III Centenary of the Death of Bernardino Ramazzini: An Ephemerid figure in the Occupational Medicine

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From our pages of the Revista Medicina y Seguridad en el Trabajo magazine (Occupational Medicine and Safety at Work) we could not end the year 2014 without dedicating some time, to which is possibly the most relevant moment in the Occupational Medicine History: the third centenary of the death of Bernardino Ramazzini, whose studies, compiled in his work the “de morbis artificum diatriba”, opened a new field in the medical science: The Occupational Medicine.

Important figures of the Spanish scientific panorama of the Science History, Medicine and Occupational Medicine were invited to work along with us for this purpose, creating a supplement which deserves an space in our libraries, whether virtual or not.

The supplement begins defining the work of Ramazzini in his Scientific and Intellectual environment, having the privileged figure of Professor Alberto Gomis Blanco and Professor Rosa Ballester Añón who talks in depth about his life and work. Throughout a geographical leap the Professor Alfredo Menéndez Navarro will lead us to an article that analyses the beginnings of Occupational Medicine in Spain. Jumping back in time, Professor María Castellano Arroyo will lead us to the challenges that the XXI century offers to the Occupational Medicine. Jorge Veiga de Cabo, the editor of the magazine, closes it with an epilogue dealing with some peculiarities of the life and work of Bernardino Ramazzini.

To open the Teatrise on the Diseases of Workers means to start finding the authentic values about the Labour Risks Prevention and particularly about the Occupational Medicine. In this work, Ramazzini does not only transmit knowledge, but attitudes that should as well rule the work of the Occupational Medicine.

The importance and current issues of Ramazzini's work is placed at different levels.

At the intellectual level, Ramazzini brought along with him not only the most advanced thinking of that time, the enlightenment thinking, but to a medicine addressed to a disadvantaged population sector which carried out the economic and commercial development of the whole Society at that time.

At the scientist level, we face a work based on rigorous observations. Compared with other mainly foreign co-workers and throughout rigorous procedures (comprehensible under a scientist method in development process at that time), we find a work written into a simple and direct narrative to the lector.

At preventing level, Ramazzini studies every single job following a clearly multidisciplinary approach: identifying the toxic substances, symptoms, signs and the most common illnesses among workers of every particular job, tackling the medical care and the possible preventing and protective measures and addressing the analysis of the production process as well as the healthy work environment.

Ramazzini's considerations about the influence of risk factors at work are also an important innovation in terms of healing the disease: the need of considering the peculiarities of the profession by the causal interpretation of the disease. In this sense, Ramazzini proposed to add a new feature to the Hippocratic questions concerning the job carried out by the patient. According with Ramazzini, the health-disease process is not explicable without taking into account the risk at work.

Ramazzini was aware of the limits of this Teatrise, and realised that following generations must bring new knowledge in order to make the Occupational Medicine, in his own words, "to occupy the place it deserves in Medicine field". It implies a conceptual evolution from the "Occupation Medicine Art" mentality to the "Science of Occupational Medicine" one.

The Institute of Health Carlos III has had the wise decision of continuing the Spanish edition of the Ramazzini's work, initiated by the former National Institute of Health and approaching it to all Spanish-speaking countries. Is there a better way to paying tribute to his work?

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