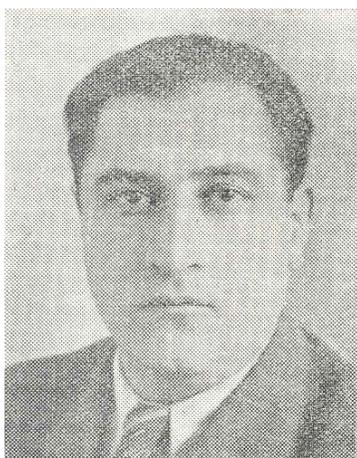

History of Contemporary Medicine in Iran

In Commemoration of Dr. Mostafa Habibi-Golpayegani (1904 – 1948): Pioneer of Modern Pathology in Iran

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Wherever the art of medicine is loved, there also is the love of humanity. "Hippocrates"



"We will try to develop perfectly in the students the sense of devotion, patriotism, discipline, and reverence to science, teacher, and colleague as well as the sense of helping poor people and patients."

(Quoted from the inaugural address of Dr. M. Habibi at the Tabriz Medical School in 1947)

Abstract

In the first decade of the twentieth century, a child was born who subsequently became an influential figure in the Iranian contemporary medicine. He was the late Dr. Mostafa Habibi-Golpayegani (1904 – 1948), pioneering professor of the modern pathology in Iran. Herein, a brief account of his life and career is presented.

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Dr. Mostafa Habibi-Golpayegani was born on September 24, 1904 in Tehran. His father, Mirza Mohammad Ali Khan, was a well-educated teacher. Mostafa attended the *Aqdasiyeh* School and then in 1925, he graduated from the *Dar al-Fonun* High School. He initially worked at Tehran's high schools as a teacher of the natural sciences.¹

Despite his success in his job, he wished to study medicine. So, he enrolled, the School of Medicine in Tehran. Then, he was trained at the State Hospital (*Marizkhaneh-e Dowlati*) in 1927. From the beginning of his medical training, Mostafa was highly interested in histology and photography.¹ He made a microscope with a magnifying power of 150. He used a camera lens as its ocular and a burning glass as its objective lens. This hand-made microscope was appreciated by Dr. Hossein Gole-Golab (1875 – 1945), a master of plant biology.¹

In 1928, after passing an examination, he was sent with a group of expeditionary students to France by the Ministry of Education. In France, Mostafa initially spent a year at the Medical School of Boredeu. Then, he was transferred to the Paris Medical School. He was a clever and hard-working student and successfully passed his courses. Finally, on May 18, 1935, he was graduated in medicine after his medical dissertation entitled "diagnosis of the breast tumors by transillumination" was approved by the authorities of the Medical School of Paris. His dissertation was written in French and contained the medical history and diagnosis of 196 patients who were referred to the *Paris Institute of Cancer* for their breast masses. Mostafa designed an instrument for detection of the breast masses by passage of the light through breast tissues. After graduation from the Medical School of Paris, the young Dr. Habibi started the special training in

pathology at the *Paris Institute of Cancer*. Since the beginning of his career, he was dominated by the influence of well-known pathologists such as Professor Charles Oberling (1895 – 1960), the herald of modern oncology, Professor Lerou and Professor Roussy. Finally, Dr. Habibi returned Iran in 1936 and was employed as an Associate Professor of Histology and Embryology at Tehran Medical School. Soon after his arrival, Dr. Habibi founded a medical laboratory at his home and named it Anatomical Pathology Laboratory (*Tashrieh-e Marazi*). He cooperated with *Pasture Institute of Iran* in Tehran too. Then, he established the first medical laboratory (called Central Laboratory) which included an anatomical pathology laboratory in 1936. The laboratory was supported by the “Tehran Health Administrative Office” located at *Naaseriyeh* Street and had a team of experts from *Pasture Institute* headed by Dr. Habibi. Specimens from various hospitals were sent to this laboratory. Dr. Habibi equipped this laboratory by the support of Dr. Javad Ashtiani, a Professor of Hygiene who was the Vice-Chancellor of the School of Medicine between 1935 and 1941.¹⁻⁶

In 1939, Professor Charles Oberling, the great French pathologist, was assigned as the Dean of Tehran Faculty of Medicine; a new era of medical education in Iran was ushered in. Professor Oberling reorganized the medical school, affiliated the available hospitals in Tehran to it, and employed well-trained physicians. In 1941, when Professor Oberling was the Dean of the School, Dr. Habibi became the first full-time professor of pathology and he combined scientific excellence with an engaging personality. These traits served to attract both young students and renowned physicians.⁷

Dr. Habibi became a member of the medical branch of Iranian Academy in 1934. In addition to his academic activities, he was also a provident manager. Thus, he was appointed by Professor Oberling as the General Inspector of the Medical Auxiliary Training Schools in 1946. He also was the Vice-Chancellor of the Medical School between 1943 and 1948. He made great efforts for ratification of modern rules and regulations needed for better planning and running of higher education centers in Iran.¹

In summary, the major endeavors of the late Professor Habibi in his short fruitful life were:

- Establishing the first modern medical laboratory

called Central Laboratory (*Azmayeshgah-e Markazi*) in Iran in 1936.¹

- Vigorous attempts in training medical students including supervising their medical dissertations.^{1,4-6}
- Training of laboratory technicians for departments of histology and pathology.³
- Founding the first medical journal of Tehran University and the first medical congress in Iran in 1945. The participants were both Iranians and foreigners from different countries.³
- Creating a collection of interesting pathology slides and a museum of diseased organs for teaching purposes.¹
- Initiating autopsy for making accurate pathologic diagnosis.
- Making an archive of around 7,850 tissue specimens of patients and making a separate file for each one containing their medical records.¹
- Arranging demonstration of interesting histopathologic slides for the physicians especially surgeons. It was held at Dr. Habib Adl's home.³ He was a European-trained Radiologist.
- Founding the Medical Auxiliary Training Schools in Mashhad (1941) (Figure 1), Shiraz (1946), and Isfahan (1946), supported by Professor Oberling, the Dean of Faculty of Medicine.^{1,5}



Figure 1. The statue of the late Professor Habibi-Golpayegani in *Medical Auxiliary Training School (Amuzeshgah-e Alee Behdari)* in Mashhad, 1949.

- Establishing of Tabriz Medical School in 1947 where he was appointed as its first Dean.^{1,5,6}
- Writing a number of useful medical textbooks; an important contribution to modern medical education in Iran.^{1,6}
- Probing various domains of pathology and publishing the results in domestic and international medical journals.^{1,6}
- Suggesting the foundation of the *Cancer Institute* for the first time in Tehran in 1946.⁸

The main areas of his research concerned Hodgkin's disease, leukemia, dermatophytic lymphadenitis, rhabdomyoma, Schuller-Christian disease and sweat gland carcinoma. He also investigated on exantho-granulomatosis of the nose in 1948 in cooperation with Professor Charles Oberling, and the German otolaryngologist, Professor Max Meyer, who was the first professor of otolaryngology in Iran between 1941 and 1947. The results of this study were published in an international journal.¹

Unfortunately, Dr. Habibi Golpayegani passed away in Tehran in 1948 (26th of Farvardin, 1327 Shamsi) at the age of 44 years, for cardiac disease. His sad demise was touched by many people especially in most Iranian medical schools. In his funeral, a multitude of people including physicians, students, and officials participated to express their appreciation to Dr. Habibi's sincere and effectual services. He was buried in Tehran at *Imamzadeh Abdullah*.^{1, 5} Certainly, his memory will be always alive in the Iranian history of medicine. May God bless his soul.

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