

# Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences over Years; the History of AJUMS

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## Dear Editor,

The cultural ties between different nations are always one of the driving forces behind the development of human sciences and flourishing the civilizations. Hence, each nation benefits from the fruits of other civilizations and therefore enhances its own development (1). One of the fields of sciences in which Persia has played a remarkable role is medical sciences. The science of medicine existed during the Avestan period and Osho Zoroaster in which there are many references in Avesta to the science of medicine and Persian physicians (2). The first Persian physician was called Trina. According to the different books written in Pahlavi language, Trina used different herbs and plants in treatment, knew the antidote for all poisons and carried a knife for surgery. The second Arian physician was called Yema. He was able to treat patients with skin and spinal diseases (3). Medical expertise and its branches were divided into five sections in Avesta (4: 9): 1) Health, 2) Forensics, 3) Surgery, 4) Herbal medicines or internal diseases, and 5) Psychology (4). In 271 A. D, the Sassanid (241-272 A. D) king, Shapur I employed Roman and Greek war prisoners after defeating a Roman army led by Emperor Valerian to build the city of Gondishapur. Half a century later, Shapur II (309-379 A.D) appointed Gondishapur as its capital and developed the city in various ways. When the Roman Empire (Zeno) closed down the scientific center of the city, Shapur II welcomed the Nestorian scholars abandoning Rome and sent the physicians to Gondishapur (5). This emigration from Rome had an immense influence on the cultural exchange between Greece and Persia. In 531, Khosrow Anushiravan (531 - 579) came to power. He was a staunch supporter of science and scholars and did his best to develop the medical school and hospital in Gondishapur. He invited Greek and Roman physicians for teaching and research in Gondishapur and

sent Borzuya (physician) to India to learn the traditional Indian medicine. When the University of Athens was closed down during the reign of Justinian (Roman empire), he welcomed the scholars with open arms. In fact, he combined the Eastern and Western cultural civilizations. During his reign, a systematic medical organization was established and the physicians were ranked. In 651 A.D, the last years of the Sassanid Empire, the city of Gondishapur was conquered by a Muslim Arab invasion. In 148 A.D, the chief physician of Gondishapur hospital was invited to Baghdad to treat the Abbasid Caliph al-Mansur (136 - 158 A.D). With the emigration of the physicians to Baghdad, the medical school and hospital in Gondishapur gradually underwent its demise and finally closed down (6). After being closed-down for 12 centuries, the university was reopened in 1995 at Ahvaz, the center of Khuzestan province. Initially, there were only two faculties, namely, agriculture and medical sciences. In 1969, the clinical hospital was founded in Jundishapur University (now, Imam Khomeini hospital). From 1986 on, the university was divided into the medical and health sciences (eight departments) and Shahid Chamran university of Ahvaz (13 departments). In 2004, the university name was changed from Medical Sciences of Ahvaz to Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences (AJUMS) (4, 5, 7). Currently, the university is active with 650 faculty members, 7000 students studying at bachelors, masters and PhD levels, fellowship and higher degrees in 163 different fields and 15000 staff. The university is one of the most prestigious universities in Iran according to the standards of ministry of health and medical education (5). However, the latest international ranking of world universities did not include any Iranian universities among the first thousand ones. This is ironic, given the fact that there existed a university in Iran almost 1800 years ago.

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