

H u n g a r y

Dr. József Török

(1814 – 1894)

After completing his doctorate in law he continued his studies at the Medical faculty of the University of Sciences in Pest where he became a medical doctor in 1843.

Then he made a two year-long study tour in Paris, Berlin and Vienna. In the course of this he was able to work with and learn from the most renowned experts of the age (Chassaignac, Romberg, Dieffenbach, Skoda, Hebra, Rokitansky). After his return home he soon got a qualification as a specialist in surgery. He first became the head of the Chemistry, Botany and Mineralogy department later the head of the Forensic Medicine and Public Health department in the College in Debrecen. Simultaneously to pursuing these tasks he worked as the head physician of the College as well. He was a real polymath; he won an application of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences still as a medical student in 1839 dealing with products of Hungary important in terms of economy. His medical doctor dissertation was the first medical cosmetic study published in Hungary, written in Latin to meet the requirements of the era titled: „*Cosmetica sanitati non inimica*” (Cosmetic products with no adverse health effects). At the same time he edited the yearbooks of the Company of Music Sciences and the Association of Sciences. He wrote with a college the Encyclopaedia of Sciences. He regularly had several medical publications issued, but in addition he also dealt extensively with a train of other special fields, among others he carried out a study on the traces of the ice ages in Hungary, the chemical compound of meteorites detected in the country, herbal teas and physiology of insects etc. His last significant work about the anatomy and physiology of man was published in 1881.

He was elected a corresponding member by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1843 and became a regular member in 1858; in his inaugural address he dealt with geological issues.

2.

His main work was his study written for the application of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences:

*First class medical waters and spas of the two Hungarian homelands.
On their natural, chemical and therapeutical power.*

The study was a success and was published as a book in 1848. As all copies were sold during the years, a second, significantly extended issue was published in 1859. (The denomination „two Hungarian homelands” in the title calls for an explanation: Hungary was legally made up of two parts until 1867 the so called Hungarian Kingdom and Transylvania).

In the introduction to his book József Török details and summarises the literature on the Hungarian mineral, thermal and medicinal waters published up until then. He gives reference to a total of 134 Hungarian and 142 Latin and German language books and publications.

He processes data about 111 thermal and medical water sources in his book describing in detail the chemical compound of the waters, temperature data as well as therapeutic indications. In addition to the simple thermal waters he listed the mineral waters into 7 main groups based on their composition. In cases where no examination material related to therapeutic effect was available he presupposed therapeutic indications based on physical and chemical properties. Besides indications he listed detailed contraindications as well. In addition to the literature set forth in the introductory part of his book, he compiles a separate list of the literature references concerning the given place when describing each spa. He paid a visit to several spas personally and gathered information on site about the possibilities, facilities and the competence of the staff. He also discusses extensively spa resorts offering drinking cures, indicating the requirements of proper bottling of mineral and medicinal waters. In the appendix of the book he emphasises that special focus is to be put on appropriate environmental conditions as well as peace and quiet in the spa resort. He deems it important that treatments be planned by the physician on site, whom the patient is to contact by all means prior to leaving the spa.

3.

It is not acceptable for a patient to have treatments at a spa upon recommendation from a physician active in the other side of the country who has no exact information about the local situations at the resort, and the correct indications and contraindications. Instead of the foreign spas much vaunted in newspapers, he recommends treatment offered by Hungarian spas especially pointing out the spas located in Buda as well as Balatonfüred and Parádk. The 1859 issue is made even more interesting by the 12 coloured lithographs presenting the most popular spas.

People are not sufficiently aware of the work of József Török even today although his activities have been and still are outstanding compared to international standards.

His former workplace, the Debrecen College (since 1918 University of Sciences) has awarded prizes to medical students in his memory in 2009.