



DR. NICOLAE KRETZULESCU 160 YEARS SINCE THE FOUNDING OF THE ROMANIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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*This paper is dedicated to Academician Professor Doctor Constantin Ionescu-Tîrgoviște –
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Introduction. The founding of the Romanian Medical Association (RMA) took place in Bucharest (1857) through the enthusiasm and devotion of three Romanian medical personalities: Dr. Nicolae Kretzulescu, Dr. Carol Davila and Dr. Gheorghe Polizu. This association is the oldest Romanian scientific society and the third medical association to be founded in Europe. The essential element in this endeavor was Dr. Nicolae Kretzulescu (1812–1900), an encyclopedic personality in the Romanian United Principalities. *Materials.* Dr. Nicolae Kretzulescu was born in 1812 in an old nobleman family in Bucharest and received a distinguished education, having both Greek and French professors – two languages he spoke fluently. He traveled to Paris, where he graduated from high school (1835) and later from Paris Faculty of Medicine (1839). Afterwards he returned to the United Principalities of Wallachia and Moldova where he became devoted to Wallachian medicine, thus opening at Colțea Hospital the first Surgical School in Bucharest (1842). Nicolae Kretzulescu took part in the revolution of 1848 and for this was exiled in France. Later, he returned to Wallachia and partook in the crowning of Alexandru Ioan Cuza (1820–1873) as the ruler of Wallachia. During Alexandru Ioan Cuza’s reign he was nominated prime minister for two terms (1862–1863 and 1865–1866) and later the President of the United Romanian Principalities Senate (1889–1890). Nicolae Kretzulescu contributed actively in the organization of the United Romanian Principalities healthcare system. Also, he had important contributions in the country’s economic development. During the reign of Carol I of Romania (1839–1914), Nicolae Kretzulescu is promoted in the diplomatic field as the representative of Romania in multiple international centers (Berlin, Roma, Sankt Petersburg and Paris). At the same time, his academic career was successful with his nomination for tenure member of the Romanian Academic Society and later of the Romanian Academy as well. *Conclusions.* The personality of Nicolae Kretzulescu was essential in the second part of the XIXth Century, having multiple contributions in the medical education field, healthcare organization and administration in the United Romanian Principalities. We also mention his involvement in agriculture, church founding and delimitation of the Romanian Orthodox Church patrimony from the Greek Orthodox Church. He also had an important contribution in the diplomatic field by representing the United Romanian Principalities in the European capitals.

Key-words: Romanian Medical Association, Nicolae Kretzulescu, Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Carol I of Romania, Romanian Academy.

INTRODUCTION

Amongst the Romanian personalities that influenced the development of medicine in Bucharest and the United Romanian Principalities

in the 19th century, the personality of Nicolae Kretzulescu (1812–1900) stands out. Dr. Nicolae Kretzulescu together with Dr. Carol Davila (1828–1884) and Dr. Gheorghe Polizu (1819–1886) founded the oldest scientific Romanian medical association, the Romanian Medical Association (RMA), in 1857¹.

RMA is the third medical society established in Europe, after the British (1832) and French (1845) societies^{2,3}. Nicolae Kretzulescu has decisively influenced the Romanian medical activity on a scientific level (by publishing practical manuals and creating the surgery school at Coltea Hospital) and organizationally (developing the healthcare system in the United Romanian Principalities). He also had an important role in the development of the medical system through the establishment of the Faculty of Medicine in Bucharest, together with Dr. Carol Davila¹.

MATERIAL

Dr. Nicolae Kretzulescu was born in Bucharest on March 1st 1812, in an old nobleman family of the Kretzulesti, being the third son of the great logophete, Alexandru Kretzulescu and his wife, Ana Câmpineanu, the daughter of the great martyr, Constantin Brâncoveanu (1654–1714). He received his distinguished education under the guidance of both French and Greek teachers and continued his studies in Paris, where he first obtained his baccalaureate (1835), then studied medicine and received his doctorate in medicine in 1839, having Gustave Flaubert (1821–1880) as a colleague (Photo 1 – Nicolae Kretzulescu at the graduation of the Faculty of Medicine in Paris). During the medical studies in Paris he had as professor the well-known anatomist and surgeon Jules Cloquet^{1,4,5,6,7}.



Photo 1 – Nicolae Kretzulescu at the graduation of the Faculty of Medicine in Paris (1839).

After graduating from the medical school he returned to Romania and practiced medicine in Bucharest, thus becoming the first doctor of Romanian nationality in Wallachia. At Coltea Hospital, in 1842, he opened a small surgical school, where he obtained the title of professor. Hospitals in Bucharest during the 1842s were endowed with surgical instruments but were not used at their fair value because there were no specialists in the respective fields. In 1840 the ruler Alexandru D. Ghica assigned him to the Black District in Bucharest as the chief physician (1840–1848), respectively as chief physician at Sf. Pantelimon Hospital (1847–1849). Later, he returned to Coltea Hospital (1849, 1851–1854)^{1,8}.

He was part of the “fourty-eighters” group (along with the Brătianu brothers, Bălcescu, Rosetti, Ghica, Tell, Magheru, Bolintineanu, Bolliac etc.), who brought a new, university-minded, intellectual and liberating spirit to Bucharest and in Romania. During the same period he is appointed member of the Commission for the Preparation of the Revolutionary Constitution on the issue of schools and public works^{5,6}. After the Revolution of 1848, because of the changes that took place in the leadership of the Romanian Country, he was exiled in France (1848–1849). In 1849 he arrived in Istanbul, where he was accredited and appointed as a doctor to a military unit in Kuteli, on the Asian coast of the Bosphorus^{1,8,9}. He returned to Bucharest in 1849, after the crowning of the ruler Barbu Dimitrie Știrbei (1799–1869)^{1,10}.

He is recognized as the initiator of the **medical education** in Bucharest and Wallachia, elaborating several human anatomy / human physiology works / manuals on medical and general surgical treatment^{1,8,11} (Photo 2 – Handbook of Small Surgery, written in Cyrillic – 1844). As a major element, he performed the French-language translation of Jean Cruveilhier’s (1791–1874) exceptional descriptive anatomy manual and implemented it in the official curricula of the Faculty of Medicine^{12,13} (Photo 3 – Descriptive Anatomy of Jean Cruveilhier – 1843). He assembled and created a large number of manuals necessary for the preparation of future Wallachian doctors^{1,14}.

His main activity was organizer of **the healthcare system**, focusing on the public health system. Along with Dr. Carol Davila, he founded the National School of Medicine and Pharmacy in Bucharest (1857), later becoming the Bucharest

University of Medicine and Pharmacy (1869)
 1,5,8,10,14 (Photo 4 – The Appearance of the Faculty of
 Medicine in Bucharest).

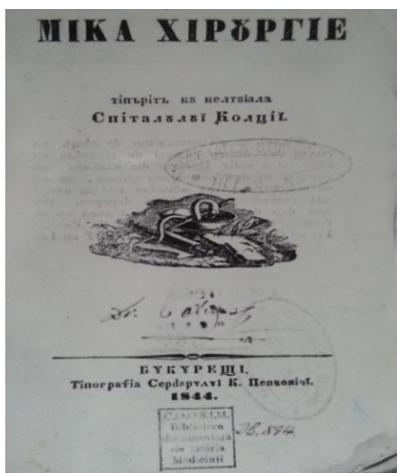


Photo 2 – Handbook of Small Surgery (written in Cyrillic) – 1844.

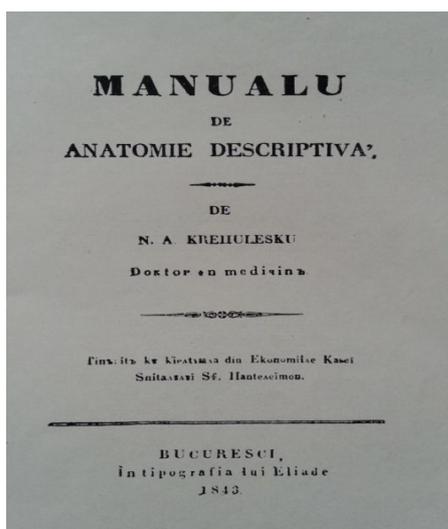


Photo 3 – Descriptive Anatomy of Jean Cruveilhier (translation in Romanian) (1843).

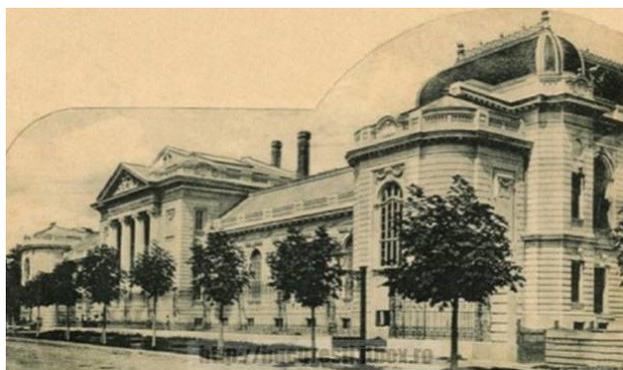


Photo 4 – The Appearance of the Faculty of Medicine in Bucharest (1869).



Photo 5 – Ensign of the Romanian Medical Association (1857).



Photo 6 – Romanian Medical Association Statute (1857).

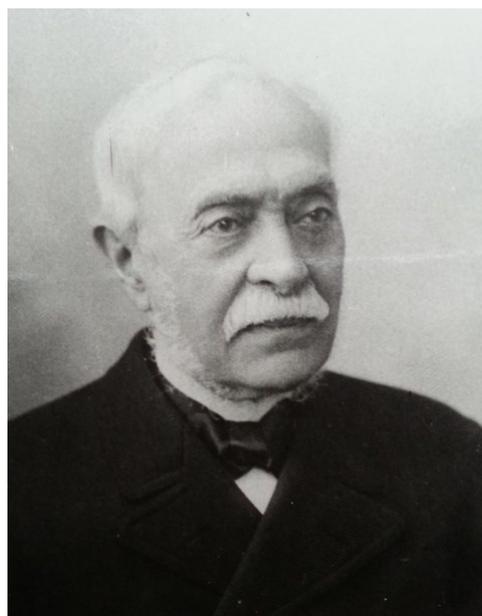


Photo 7 – Academician Nicolae Kretzulescu (1895).

Another element by which Nicolae Kretzulescu reformed the Romanian medicine is the creation of the third medical association in Europe, the Romanian Medical Association (RMA) in 1857, together with Dr. Carol Davila (1828–1884) and Dr. Gheorghe Polizu (1819–1886)^{1,8} (Photo 5 – Ensign of the Romanian Medical Association) (Photo 6 – RMA Statute).

At the same time, he established the first hygiene and sanitation councils; initiated the first population census in Romania; he succeeded as well in creating the first Romanian Pharmacopoeia (1863) and founded the Romanian Red Cross Society (July 1876). We mention that during the War of Independence he organized a campaign hospital at his mansion in Leurdeni, which he offered at the disposal of the Roman army^{1,5,6,8}.

On the **administrative level**, being a good organizer, he made major contributions to the emancipation of the country's economic activity. In the United Romanian Principalities he created the General Directorate of Public Archives and established the Public Instruction Council. As part of the administrative unification action of the Principals, he created the statistical office for them; made the first censuses of the population and the goods of the United Principalities; created the first state penitentiary system; has initiated regulations for the functioning of public libraries; participated in the elaboration of the tobacco monopoly law and established the Romanian Bank^{1,8}.

In the **agrarian field**, he participated in the elaboration of the laws on the implementation of the democratic reform and the ownership of the peasants. He pleaded for the abolishing of Gypsies slavery and for the law of slavery abolition^{5,6}.

He was present in the **economic field** as well, initiating the law railways development^{1,6,8}.

As the prime minister, in the **military field**, besides the administrative, social, educational and medical activities, he created the first military camp in Ploiesti, where soldiers from Muntenia and Moldova participated, forming what will later become the future army of the United Romanian Principalities^{5,6}.

An important chapter in Nicolae Kretzulescu's activity was the continuous dedication to the political activity of the United Romanian

Principalities. Thus he helped to implement the reforms of Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza (1820–1873), which represented a new vision in Romanian politics – now with an European vision in mind. Much of his work focused on liberal politics, occupying numerous public positions: senator (1867), deputy (1870), Minister of Interior Affairs (1862–1863), Minister of Interior Affairs, Agriculture and Public Works (1866), Minister of Justice (1862–1863, respectively 1865–1866), Minister of Justice, Religious Affairs and Education (1864–1865), Minister of Finance (1865–1866), Minister of Public Works (1862, respectively 1871–1873), Minister of Culture (1879–1880), culminating with the function of Prime Minister for two terms (1862–1863, respectively 1865–1866) and President of the Senate (1889–1890)^{1,5,6,8,9,15,16}.

Doctor Nicolae Kretzulescu and his entire family contributed essentially to the development of **church settlements** in Bucharest. He initiated measures to secularize monasteries and established the use of Romanian as the sole language spoken during the Orthodox Christian service in Romania. An essential element to mention was the fact that one of his ancestors, Iordache Kretzulescu, who married Safta, one of the daughters of the martyr Constantin Brâncoveanu, raised in 1720–1722 the Kretzulescu Church in Bucharest^{6,7,8,17}.

Nicolae Kretzulescu, as a prime minister, was unsurprisingly present in the artistic and **cultural fields** as well. He founded the National Pinacoteca of Bucharest, reopened the Music and Declamation Conservatory and founded the Belle-Arte School and the National Museum of Antiquities^{1,6}.

The Kretzulescu family was involved in **the field of architecture** as well, contributing to the development of Bucharest, considered the “Little Paris”. Thus, Elena Kretzulescu (1857–1930) is the founder of Kretzulescu Palace in Bucharest, built in 1902 in the French Renaissance style with baroque influences by the famous Romanian architect Petre Antonescu and surrounded by the most famous park in Bucharest, Cișmigiu Garden^{6,7}.

The **diplomatic qualities** of Nicolae Kretzulescu started manifesting from a young age, when, during his studies in Paris, he was influenced by most liberal ideas in France. On this occasion, we mention that he attended the Chamber of Deputies

sessions to hear the speeches of the great French orators of that time. Later on, he was part of, alongside his “fourty-eighters” colleagues, in the delegation that had the task of reaching an agreement with Hungary to prevent the danger of a Tsarist Invasion. King Carol I of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen (1839–1914) appreciated Nicolae Kretzulescu for his well-educated personality and promoted him in the field of diplomacy (1873) by sending him to Berlin as a diplomatic agent (1873–1874). Nicolae Kretzulescu continued his diplomatic ascension and became a plenipotentiary minister, active in major European capitals, such as Rome (1875–1879) and St. Petersburg (1879–1891). He ended his career as Plenipotentiary Minister of Romania in Paris (1891–1893), the position in which he signed the Romanian-French Trade Convention^{1,5,6,8,9}.

Nicolae Kretzulescu was a remarkable personality in the field of literature and science. He founded, together with Constantin Exarhu (1836–1898) and Vasile Alexandrescu-Urschia (1834–1901), the Romanian Literary Society (1866), which later became the Academic Society of Romania (1867) and finally, the Romanian Academy (1879). He was elected member of the Romanian Academic Society (1871), being many times president of the scientific section, culminating in his election as President of the Romanian Academy twice (1872–1873, respectively 1895–1898)^{1,5,6,8,18} (Photo 7 – Academician Nicolae Kretzulescu).

Dr. Nicolae Kretzulescu died on June 26, 1900, at the Leurdeni mansion (Argeş County), at the age of 88^{1,5,6}. He left an undying legacy for his countrymen in all the fields he ever touched in the United Romanian Principalities: politics, administration, diplomacy, science, culture and most importantly medicine.

CONCLUSIONS

Nicolae Kretzulescu, encyclopedic personality, has effectively contributed to the ascension of all areas in which he was involved: medical, administrative, economic, legal, cultural, scientific, diplomatic and academic in the United Romanian Principalities. The Romanian Medical School pays tribute to the unquestionable merits of Acad. Prof.

Dr. Nicolae Kretzulescu, a tremendous medical, cultural, political and diplomatic personality. All his endeavors are recorded in Romanian Medical School and the Romanian Academy library.

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