

LEARNING FROM HYSTORY WISDOM: THE 5TH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF TALASOTHERAPY, MAY 23RD-30TH, 1928, ROMANIA; WHERE WE WERE 100 YEARS AGO?

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Abstract: *The article is a remembering of the status of Romanian balneology 100 years ago by underlining the national and international impact of International Congress of Thalasootherapy organised in 1928 in our country, in the context of blooming development of Romania in the time between the First and the Second World War. Information published in journals, articles and books of balneology were used and interpreted (“Curierul Băilor”-“The Courier of Baths, Climatic Resorts and Tourism”, “Revista de Hidrologie Medicala si Climatologie”-“The Magazine of Medical Hydrology and Climatology”, numbers published in 1928 and special editions dedicated to the International Congress of Thalasootherapy and National Balneal, Climatic and Touristy Exhibition).*

Internationally, the Congress represented a unique chance to inform Europe especially about the Romanian scientific concerns and activity in the field of balneology and thalasootherapy and about the potential of Romanian seaside in therapy, touristy and entertainment at the beginning of the 20th century. The Romanian balneal potential should be continue re-evaluated, associating the efforts of medical, economic and political powers, achieving the level of of the European development.

Key words: *medical balneology, thalasootherapy, balneal therapy’s potential.*

1. Historical background

At the beginning of the 20th century Romanian balneology relied to the European scientific requirement using the efforts and competences of devoted physicians and transforming their work in a fruitful medical experience [1, 2, 3, 8].

Being practiced in the balneal resorts, the science of balneology continually hits the lack of judicial, financial support as well as the lack of advertising strategies from the part of Romanian authorities [2, 3, 5, 9].

The other European countries have already had a well designed balneal policy at the beginning of the 20th century. Also,

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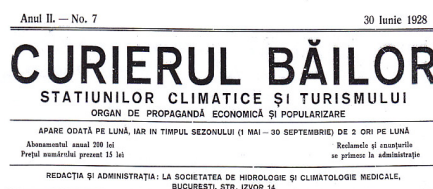
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the progress in balneology was the feed-back of the multiple scientific events organised all over the world, followed by the results of science and theoretical studies applied into practice in the field of balneal therapy and talasotherapy [2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 11]. There was a multiplicity of balneal congresses yearly hosted by different countries, sometimes multiple related congresses in different countries in the same year. For example Berlin hosted the Congress of Balneology and Exhibition in 1927 and Lyon hosted another Congress and exhibition in the same year and also yearly excursions were organised for foreign doctors in Italy. In 1927 in Lyon was decided the future actions and meetings for 1928, 1929 and the main Congress in 1930, as follow: the meeting of International Society of Hydrology in London, the Congress of Thalassotherapy (and National Exhibition) in Bucharest-Constanta in May 1928. For 1929 were already schedule the Congress and International Exhibition in Budapest and for 1930 the Congress and Exhibition in Prague [2, 3].

Romania was choose to organise and host the Congress of Thalassotherapy in Bucharest-Constanta in May 1928, as a recognition of the Romanian contribution to the balneological studies and research, by yearly representation in the important scientific meetings in Europe. 1927 represents the highest pick of Romanian balneology representation Europe wide ever. It was decided consequently to give Romania the opportunity to express the national work and efforts in the field and to show the world Romanian legacy and present activity in balneal therapy and mineral waters' field.

Also, the Congress debates had an important national impact and opened a new stage in the development of medical and touristy balneology in Romania by showing the necessity of cultivating and

raising the Romanian balneology at the level of medical science with national public utility [2, 3, 6, 7].



Congresul al 5-lea Internațional de talasoterapie.
La Băile Herculane.

Fig. 1. Pictures during the *International Congress of Thalassotherapy, Bucharest-Constanta, 23 to 30 May 1928*

2. The 5th Congress of Thalassotherapy - an Important Moment in the Development of Romanian Physiotherapy

The 5th International Congress of Thalassotherapy took place in Romania in May 23-30th, 1928, in two different locations, Bucharest and Constanța. Choosing two cities was from the beginning a good strategy in the aim to have a high level of scientific presentations and debates in Bucharest and then an applicative part in Constanța adding touristic visits to the Congress's workshops. The main purpose of the Congress was to increase the international visibility of Romanian balneology looking forward to share the

Romanian experience and concerns related to the balneal activities in Romania and the touristic potential waiting to be valued and developed [2, 3, 7].

To target these objectives the organization comity used strategic instruments building a coherent plan of organizing, advertising, publishing the activities if International Congress of Thalaso-therapy, Romania 1928, a serious and documented model of what we are considering today as a management plan of a solid project. This managerial plan included many efforts of people, hundreds of days and working nights to think, structure, design, create and execute and coordinate the multiple activities suppose to be developed during an International meeting. Studying all the activities, they can be structured on few principal levels of activity and work, good to be followed as a planning and management model anytime today.

3. Congress Organizing Process

The magnitude of the event and the scientific performance of *assigned personalities* conferred big value and consistence to the Congress.

a. The initiative to organise an international event in balneology in Romania represented a natural result of the policy nationally applied in balneal field. Starting with 1927 the Romanian professionals working in balneology field were focused on organising, internationally wide representing and advertising the Congress to the European specialists. In this aim General Vicol represented Romania to the 12th Congress of Medical Hydrology, Climatology and Geology in Lyon, „the largest Congress in the field took place so far”. At his returning General Vicol wrote in “The Courier of Baths, Climatic Resorts and Tourism” about the *aspects of sanitary policy* that Congress pointed: the workshops “*kept the attention*

of a very numerous public and started sparkling and interesting discussions”. Even the new science of balneo-climatology left the empiric phase, it started the season of applied science, thanks to the widely studies, clinical observations and experiences. The resorts persisting in the old empiric structure and not reconsider the new innovative information brought by science in the resort activity will be in the strange situation of not be able to cope to a modern functioning and business running of their activities. “*This notice is more for the state officials and their responsibilities, the first need to think how to improve and modernise the balneal treatment in their own resorts and how to rely to scientific research.*”

General Vicol also concluded „*the most important message to a state as Romania, owner of numerous balneal and climatic resorts, is that is compulsory to have a balneal policy. All states have one and it will be a crime Romania not have one and be regressive, a crime to the national economy and to the Romanian public health*

General Vicol concluded in his article-report the real managerial message of how scientific based balneology, organised, responsible and ruled by good intentions can offer to the economic boom, social progress and international visibility: “This means national policy in balneology: to practice science, to reveal and value your own resorts and national mineral waters in the aim to bring as much foreigners as it gets in order to rich an important development of your baths and to show your capacities by adding an Exhibition to the Congress. This strategy has to focus the mind as well as the eyes attention. This policy is strongly recommended as it is practiced all over the world and we have the duty to do it conformity” [2, 3].

b. Official and personal contacts of Romanian representative in Lyon and in other events as well as the discussions and “politeness with our neighbour friends” advanced the invitation of foreigners specialists to the Congress organise in Romania. General Vicol explained that “the first participants on the list will be the friend nations and the neighbour countries, members of the International Association of Thalaso-therapy.” The principal contacts were established with Dr. Baudouin, Vice President of Permanent Committee in Paris and with Dr. Leo, General Secretary of the same committee [2, 3, 4].

c. National decision and responsibility were voted in November 28th 1927 by the Council of Ministers to organise in the same time the International Congress of Thalaso-therapy and the National Exhibition of balneology, climatology and tourism (opening in May 15th 1928) and asked the balneal institutions and mineral waters’ springs interested in exhibition organizing and success (being a benefit propaganda) to contribute financially in the organisation. A management and organising commission was formed in this purpose [2, 3].

d. The special anniversary edition of “The Courier of Baths” (no. 4/1928) dedicated to the International Congress of Thalaso-therapy underlined that the Congress was organised under the **high patronage** of Her Majesty Queen Maria of Romania and had the Prime Minister of Romania as the President of Honour Committee and the members of the Committee were the Ministers of Industry, Domains and Finances, Internal Affairs, External Affairs, Communications, Public Instruction, Work, Public Works and War, members and representatives of Senate and Romanian Chamber, Rectors of the Universities, Deans of Medical Faculties, The National Bank Governor, Professors, Generals. *The patronage committee*

included the specialists from the Minister of Health the directors of Balneology University Institute, Geologic University Institute, Geography and Meteorology University Institute, General Director of Mines, Prefects and Mayre of Constanţa and Cetatea Albă, Bucharest.

The permanent committee of International association of thalaso-therapy worked in Paris, represented by Professor d’Arsonval and Professor Robin as honour presidents, Professor Marcel Labbe as presidents, Specialists Doctors. Their contribution to the organising committee is a prove of the foreign support, especially from France, and the recognition of international interest in participation to the Congress organised Romania [2, 3].

4. Workshops preparing the International Congress of Thalaso-therapy

They were designed to include all scientific activities in related, associated or adjuvant domains for balneology and particularly with thalaso-therapy. The main workshops were: The workshops of University Institute of Balneology led by Professor Anibal Theohari, the most well known personality in balneology at that moment; The workshops of University Institute of Meteorology led by Professor Henri Oteteleşanu; The workshops of Institute of Geology led by Professor Mrazek; The workshops of Biology and Physics-Chemistry prepared by Professor Bujor and Borcea, Costăchescu, Şumuleanu, Zaharia, Hurmuzescu, Musculeanu, Giurgea etc.; The marine balneal workshops; The touristic workshops; The workshops of National Office of Physical Education; Rapoarts from France (professors Sorel and Armand Delille), from Belgium (Dr. Delchef), from Romania (professors Bălăcescu and Manicaticide, Dr. Dona I. etc.).

5. The Schedule of Congress' Activities

It included lectures and speeches and also extra activities connected to balneology for specialists interested in balneal activities; most of them were visits to balneal resorts focused on professional exchange of information and intensive training sessions (to Poștile de Fier, Băile Herculane or to I Mai (Băile); excursions to Slănic Prahova, Moreni, Sinaia, Brașov, Bran, Peștera Dâmbovicioarei, etc.; visits of Mamaia and Tekirghiolului; Folk festivals; excursion to Cetatea Albă, Vâlcov and Danube Delta; optional excursion to Constantinopoli (Istanbul) by ship or to balneal resorts in Govora-Călimănești and then to Curtea de Argeș).

6. Opening Messages of the Congress

The congress beginning with underlined in each speech the honour of Romania to be the host of this International distinguish scientific reunion. The opening speech of Professor Dr. A. Teohari defined the International Congress of Talasoterapy in Bucharest inside the frame of international context of 1928, revealing the fact that: „thalasoterapy represents today a therapeutically branch, bringing together many specialists and professionals in different countries, gaining an important social role.” Need to be noted the presence of special guests and participants: members of diplomatic teams, of Portugal, Yugoslavia, Japan, Poland, Italy, messengers from din Belgium, Egypt, Greece, members of Romanian Academy and other representatives of the Society of Hydrology and Climatology. Professor Teohari brought an honest homage to the presence of foreign guests that increased the scientific level of the Congress by their professional value and probity. [4]

7. International Congress in Medical Media

International Congress of Thalasotherapy reflected in medical media fulfilled the main objects by publishing the Congress Program and medical and organisational information, in journals targeting large or small population, European wide or limited to Romania.

a. International Media (Presse Medicale, Le Paris Medicale), Romanian balneal journals and climatology focused journals (“Curierul Băilor”-“The Courier of Baths, Climatic Resorts and Tourism”, “Revista de Hidrologie Medicala si Climatologie”-“The Magazine of Medical Hydrology and Climatology”), medical Romanian journals and Romanian political press.

b. In special editions of „Curierul băilor” dedicated to the International Congress of Thalasotherapy and National Balneal, Climatic and Touristy Exhibition wrote for their readers and for posterity that „Romania needs at least 70 years to reach the cultural level of Western Countries” and she “needs to walk with giant steps”. Also, media thanked to the distinguish guests and scientists for the honour showed by answering to the invitation and participating with their knowledge, results and authority in the field of balneology. The journal defined itself as “the propaganda tool of hydro mineral Romanian institutions” and from this position it made a rigorous analysis of the Romanian balneology situation in that time: “balneal resorts are very numerous and represent a treasure of our country” and mentioned in advanced that the resorts will be detailed presented during the Congress as organising as well as science content. In thalasotherapy field the

Congress was the occasion to “release in the participants hands the published articles and serious studies in the branch of balneology”. Romania “cannot presents yet our sea resorts well organised as the western baths”. We were blessed with “a huge wealthy that nature offer to us gracefully and we hope our treatment areas will develop and become an attraction for many people searching for this regions” [2, 3].

8. Scientific Presentations

Romanian and foreign invited guests had specific presentations on the talasotherapy specificity in their own countries, underlining the high development of balneal resorts and of balneology as science in each corner of the world where there are such scientific work and concerns. In this aim there were some presentations, original studies of balneology and talasotherapy, as followed:

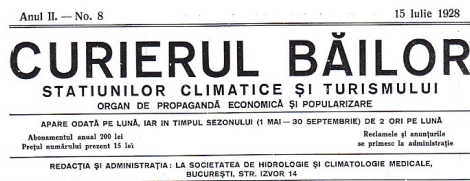
I. „*La thalassotherapie sur la Cote d’Azur*” presented by dr. Gaston Sardou, intern of Paris Hospital of Nice, pleaded for the balneal and climatic parameters characterising the exciting clime of the Azury Coast.

II. „*La Mer Roumaine*” presented by Nicolae Iorga (representing the Romanian Academy, correspondent of French Institute, professor at Bucharest University, known to Sorbonne, President of Deputies Chamber, member of several Academies, etc.), a real historical analysis of Black Sea and Romanian people on the Black Sea seaside; the presentation was followed by General Vicol speech (balneoclimatic general inspector and former president of Medical Society of Hydrology and chief of Sanitary Service of

Romanian Army), called „*La thalassotherapie en Roumanie*”, presented the zone of Dobrogea Romanian seaside (Techirghiol-Movila, Mangalia), South Basarabia Riviera, with eastern area of Sabolt Salty Lake and Limanul Nistrului (balneal sea areas Serghievca-Sabolat, Dacia-Cordon and balneal areas Akembet and Budachi) and the western area of salty lakes Sasic, Sagas, Alibey and Burnas.

III. „*Le stations marines climatiques et balneaires de la France*” presented by dr. Georges Baudouin, associated professor of Hydrology and Climatology Institute of France College and vice president of International Association of Talasotherapy; it is a presentation of franch seaside of North Sea, Atlantic Ocean, Mediterranean Sea and of the pathology treated using balneal cure and thalassotherapy (2630 km of seaside, France had a lot of resorts in 1928: Berck-Plage, Deauville, Dinard, Arcachon, Biarritz, St-Jean de Luz, Heydane (Atlantic Seaside), St. Raphael, Nice, Cannes, Antibes, Menton (Mediterranean Seaside).

IV. „*La thalassoterapia e le stazioni thalassoterapiche italiane*” presented by professor Giulio Ceresole, from Venice, professor in Padova University. It was a presentation on balneoclimatic activity in Italian seaside resorts (Lido, Rimini, Abbazia, Grado, Portorose, Brioni (Adriatic Coast), Viareggio, Livorno, Palermo-Montelo, Napoli si Riviera Ligure (small closed seaside resorts) [2, 3].



Dr. Armand Delle Prof. M. Labbe General Dr. Viot Dr. Ellinger Dr. G. Baedrich

CONGRESUL 5^{LEA} INTERNAȚIONAL DE TALASOTERAPIE
Spre mormântul soldatului necunoscut

Fig. 2. Pictures during the International Congress of thalassotherapy, Bucharest-Constanta, 23 to 30 May 1928

9. The Main Scientific Topic

The main scientific topic of the 5th Congress was specified at the 4th Congress in Arcachon, a very known and challenging subject for 1928: „Pott Morbus”. At the beginning of the 20th century tuberculosis was a frighten disease, with multiple complications, shortening the life expectancy, an increasing incidence all over the world. The 20th century brought the results and proves of the possibility of curing the tuberculosis by specific therapy (specific antibiotics) and the hope of limiting the complications and infirmity. Among all therapies, balneology had the role of treating the early stages of tuberculosis (especially in children) and the secondary prophylaxis (of complications). Europe had at that moment

many sanatoriums for tuberculosis patients along all seashores of European seas in France, Italy, Greece, Romania, England, Nordic countries, etc. In this context, “Pot Morbus” was a “hot” subject for medical community, proving in the same time the public and social utility of balneal studies in increasing the population health and wellbeing [2, 3].

10. The scientific, political and economical significance

The scientific, political and economical significance of the International Congress of Talasotherapy Bucharest-Constanța and the National Balneal, Climatic and Touristy Exhibition has been defined starting with preparation of the Congress, Congress’s debates and ideas exchanges and not finally during all discussions, debates, analysis and learning lessons in the time after the congress.

The Congress debates had an important national impact and opened a new stage in the development of medical and touristy balneology in Romania by showing the necessity of cultivating and raising the Romanian balneology at the level of medical science with national public utility.

Conclusions

Internationally, the Congress represented a unique chance to inform Europe especially about the Romanian scientific concerns in the field of balneology and thalassotherapy and about the therapy, touristy and entertainment potential of Romanian seaside at the beginning of the 20th century.

The Romanian balneal development achieved the highest level at the first half of 20th century, internationally recognised.

The Romanian balneal potential should be continue re-evaluated, sustained and reconfirmed using and working with the associated effort of medical, economic and political forces, up to the level of the continue competition and ongoing progress in Europe.

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