
EDITORIAL: THE *ABRILS DE L'HOSPITAL*: EIGHT SUCCESSFUL EDITIONS**SVMMA Editorial Board**e-mail: revistasvmma.ircvm@ub.edudoi: [10.1344/Svmma2019.13.9](https://doi.org/10.1344/Svmma2019.13.9)

The Hospital in Modern Society, a book edited by Eliot Freidson and headed by a wonderful chapter signed by the American physician and medical historian George Rosen, “The Hospital: Historical Sociology of a Community Institution,” was published in 1963. Rosen’s text deeply impacted the history of medicine and hospitals, presenting hospitals as one of the cornerstones of the much anticipated welfare society and the best reflection of a community’s common interest. On the basis of this work, everyone understood that the study of hospitals should be approached from an interdisciplinary, multifocal, and cross-cultural perspective, without neglecting its sociological aspects. A few years later, in 1988, the English historian Peregrine Horden published another seminal article in the journal *Social History of Medicine*: “A Discipline of Relevance: The Historiography of the Later Medieval Hospital.” Although its focus was on the late medieval world, Horden went even further than Rosen in claiming that the history of hospitals deserved to be considered a relevant historiographic discipline in itself, on the grounds that a relevant discipline is one that is able to ask itself about “what it should encompass” and “what connections it should establish.”

Fortunately, Rosen and Horden were not rare bright spots in an otherwise bleak panorama, but gradually many other contemporaries also contributed their share. It would not be fair, for example, to overlook the pioneering initiative of the Centro Italiano di Storia Ospitaliera (CISO), which between the 1950s and 1960s promoted a number of conferences devoted to hospitals in their broadest sense. Following this model, in 1972 a conference was held in Lisbon under the title *A pobreza e a assistência aos pobres na península Ibérica durante a Idade Média*. Between 1980 and 1982, the experience was again emulated with the publication of a couple of volumes by the CSIC and under the direction of Dr Manel Riu: *La pobreza y la asistencia a los pobres en la Cataluña medieval*.

Two fundamental and much more recent milestones need to be mentioned here. In 1999, the first conference organized by the newly established International Network for the History of Hospitals (INHH) was held in Norwich. The INHH aimed to connect researchers and anyone interested in the history of hospitals across Europe. To fulfil this purpose, it undertook to continue organizing biannual international conferences. These efforts resulted in three publications: *The Impact of Hospitals, 300-2000* (2007), *Hospitals and Communities, 1100-1960*, and *Hospital*

Life: Theory and Practice from the Medieval to the Modern (2013). The success of the INHH is unquestionable but, despite the fact that its fifth conference was held in Barcelona (2009), its impact on the Iberian side of the Pyrenees was barely symbolic.

It is at this point that the second milestone came into being. In 2008, the Institute for Research on Medieval Cultures (IRCVM) was born with the goal of bringing together as many medievalists from the University of Barcelona as possible across a variety of disciplines: history, philology, philosophy, law, and art history, among others. Under this umbrella, a seminar devoted to medieval hospitals was held in 2011, and the first edition of the *Abrils de l'Hospital* took place only a year later, in 2012. The goals of this conference were varied: first, like in the case of the INHH, to create a forum for debate that would allow the interaction of specialists in the history of assistance and hospitals of the pre-modern era, both nationally and internationally; and secondly, the *Abrils de l'Hospital* aimed to publicise this field by holding an annual scientific event that would make it possible to present unpublished research, encourage new research by new master's and doctoral students and, in short, guarantee its international projection. The involvement of other institutions related to the UB and the IRCVM, such as the CSIC, the Library of Catalonia, and the Foundation of the Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau, were decisive for the *Abrils* to take root from the very beginning. The first edition consisted of a round table with a very explicit title, "Why a history of hospitals?" It was held on 17 April 2012, a date that was not random, but chosen in memory of 17 April 1401, when the Hospital de la Santa Creu was founded in Barcelona. To honor this anniversary, the *Abrils de l'Hospital* have uninterruptedly kept going every April from 2012 to 2019. During this time, several undergraduate and master's dissertations have been presented at the UB, and some doctoral theses have been undertaken; scientific ties have been strengthened with other universities in Italy, France, England, Germany, Portugal and Malta; and among the many publications that have resulted from this endeavour, two monographs stand out that bring together some of the most relevant contributions: *Imago Civitatis. Hospitales y manicomios en Occidente* and *Redes hospitalarias. Historia, economía y sociología de la sanidad* (2018).

This year's edition, the eighth one, held in Barcelona, was very special as we had the honour of sharing the limelight with the 12th INHH Conference. The IRCVM and the INHH are the two strongest European entities dedicated to deepening, promoting, and ensuring the continuity and renewal of historical studies on hospitals; thus, bringing them together was an inspired idea, as revealed by the success of participation and the geographical diversity of speakers.

From now on, the objective of the *Abrils de l'Hospital* is to continue moving forward, to open up new horizons, to keep arousing the interest and curiosity of master's and doctoral students and of all those interested in learning about the world of hospitality in its many aspects. It is not enough just to research, to promote publications of high scientific rigour, and to organise

stimulating international scientific meetings. Our commitment goes much further. We also want to make everyone aware of the importance of our material, artistic, architectural and documentary hospital heritage, as well as of the richness of our intangible hospital heritage, that is, that which is directly rooted in our historical and identity memory.

