

## L4. LECTURE

# Manuel Gomes de Lima Bezerra at the Forefront of Medical Journalism, Medical Societies, and the History of Medicine in Portugal

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**ABSTRACT:** Manuel Gomes de Lima Bezerra is one of the most distinguished medical personalities of the 18th century in Portugal. Known for having been the founder of medical societies and medical journalism among us, his intervention and influence surpassed these domains, continually aroused the interest of his peers and countrymen, and he continues to be a source of inspiration today.

He was a faithful representative of the Age of Enlightenment and the European scientific elite, endowed with great scientific and medical-historical erudition, a reformer, and an agent of change. He bequeathed a vast body of scientific work published in periodicals and monographs, testimonies of his knowledge, his way of being, and his ability to move between various social circles, acting as a mediator between traditionalists and those who embraced a new paradigm. If, on the one hand, he holds a pioneering place in national medical historiography; on the other, he was, through the shift in mentalities, a promoter of the institutions, associations, and medical journals emerging in the following century. Knowledge about him and his work is clearly an unfinished task that urgently needs continuity.

**KEYWORDS:** medical biography, medical journalism, medical societies, History of Portuguese Medicine

## INTRODUCTION

The face of the first Portuguese medical journal, the *Zodiaco Lusitanico Delphico* (1749)<sup>[1]</sup>, organized in the image of the *Zodiacus Medicus Gallicus, Nouvelles decouvertes, sur toutes les parties de la Médecine* (1679)<sup>[2]</sup>, edited by the Parisian surgeon Nicolas de Blegny, was the inspiration and served as the motto for the 2nd Luso-Galician Congress of the History of Medicine (Porto, 21-22 November 2025), materialized in the promotional graphic line edited. The *Zodiaco* was the official organ of the second surgical association founded in Portugal, the *Real Academia Medico-Portopolitana* (1749)<sup>[3]</sup>, both initiatives authored by the then-surgeon Manuel Gomes de Lima Bezerra.

It was thus justified to recall his life and work through the reading of his writings and what has been written about him to date. Aiming to recall the value of this distinguished 18th-century Portuguese physician and present the most relevant facts of his life and his scientific, clinical, social, and cultural work, we succinctly listed his main positions, distinctions, and activities.

He was a Surgeon and Surgeon of the Royal House<sup>[4]</sup> and graduated in Medicine from the Portuguese University (1767)<sup>[5]</sup>; Professor of Anatomy and Surgery in Porto<sup>[6]</sup>; Judge Commissioner of Surgery in Porto (1751-1791), for 40 years<sup>[7]</sup>; Founder of medical journalism and the Academies of Surgery and Medicine in Portugal (1748)<sup>[8]</sup>; Collegian of the Royal College of St.



Ferdinand, of the Surgeons of the Royal House of Castile, in the court of Madrid<sup>[9]</sup>; Member of the Royal Society of Physicians of Madrid (since 3-12-1750)<sup>[10]</sup>; Member of the Royal Society of Sciences of Seville (since 30-6-1752)<sup>[11]</sup>; Honorary Member of the Economic Society of Good Compatriots Friends of the Public Good of Ponte de Lima (since 1779)<sup>[12]</sup>; Corresponding Member of the Royal Academy of Sciences of Lisbon (since 1779)<sup>[13]</sup>; Numerical Physician of the Royal House (20-3-1797)<sup>[14]</sup>; distinguished with the Habit of Christ (17-5-1804)<sup>[15]</sup>; and author of Monographs and Periodicals of the specialty where the medical-historical content is a constant, often alongside the Portuguese and European economic and social reality.

He was affiliated with the politics of the Marquis of Pombal<sup>[16]</sup> and had the protection and credit of the Catholic Church<sup>[17]</sup>, as demonstrated in the Dedications of his works and in various citations throughout his writings. He was a man with vast scientific, historical, economic, social, and cultural literacy, both national and European, well-traveled (Spain, France, and England), with an enormous capacity for work, possessing encyclopedic knowledge and authoring a vast literary body of work.

Various epistolary documents attest to his vast network of contacts and confirm his commitment to promoting medical and surgical training and practice in Portugal<sup>[18]</sup>, aiming for the common good, the dignification of his profession, and national prestige. He was a Collegian of Academies of Surgery, Medicine, and Sciences (Madrid and Seville), long before his graduation in Medicine, a fact that highlights the recognition of his value by members of these scientific associations.

He defended a renovating teaching method, grounded in observation and experience<sup>[19]</sup>. He evidenced strong pedagogical skills, expressed in the creation and implementation of the academies and journals of which he was a pioneer, in the formal presentation of his writings, namely in the alphabetical ordering and dialogue structure, and in the presentation of contents using fiction [20 to 22]. His clinical practice reflected the accumulation of knowledge based on experience and the exchange of knowledge among his national and European peers. From reading his writings, several references stand out regarding his personal Library, full of specialty works, foreign, original, and rare<sup>[23, 24]</sup>. He demonstrated strong dedication to his homeland and to Portugal<sup>[25, 26]</sup> and a high sense of public duty<sup>[27, 28]</sup>.

## RESULTS

Let us chronologically follow his life and work, which will constitute a source of inspiration for readers in the present and indisputably for future societies, as happened in the past with researchers such as A. Garcia Vazquez (1748), M. José Leitão (1788), Inocêncio da Silva (1858), José Esteves Pereira and Guilherme Rodrigues (1872), C. Pinho Leal (1876), Figueiredo da Guerra (1877, 1898, 1900, 1910), Maximiano Lemos (1882, 1899, 1900-1909), J. Augusto Vieira (1886), Albano Belino (1895), Leite de Vasconcelos (1905), Cunha Brandão (1911), Pinto Osório (1915), José Caldas (1919), F. Barras de Aragón (1921), Hernâni Monteiro (1926), J. Arias Sanjurjo (1928), Marcelo Macias (1929), J.A. Pires de Lima (1929), António Ferreira (1933-35), Reys Lemos (1938), Baptista de Lima (1938), Conde da Aurora (1939), Veiga Pires (1947), Júlio de Lemos (1948), Luís de Pina (1949), Hélène Piwnik (1982), Pedro Vilas Boas Tavares (1988, 2008), Filipe Vasconcelos dos Santos (2001), Maria Luísa Malato and Hélder Baião (2017), Laurinda Abreu (2021), among the main ones.

Manuel Gomes de Lima Bezerra was born in Sta. Marinha de Arcozelo, Ponte de Lima, Portugal, on January 4, 1727, in a house on the “street beyond the bridge”<sup>[29, 30]</sup>. (Fig. 1) His parents were João Gomes de Lima, a rural landowner, descendant of an abbot of the parish of Santa Cruz do Lima, and Rosa da Silva Bezerra, daughter of Manuel Bezerra da Mesquita, Lord of the Tower of S. Gil de Perre, Viana do Castelo. He thus possessed noble ancestry, although without a personal noble title.

He was baptized on the 12th of the same month, as stated in the entry in the Book of Baptisms of Santa Marinha de Arcozelo: “*Manoel, legitimate son of João Gomes and his wife Rosa da Silva, of the Suburb beyond the Bridge of this parish of St. Marinha de Arcozelo: He was born on the fourth day of the month of January of the year one thousand seven hundred and twenty-seven. He was baptized in this Church by me, Father Pedro Barbosa, curate thereof, on the twelfth day of the said month and year. Godparents were Miguel de Mattos and Felicia de Abreu (...)*”<sup>[31]</sup>.

After preparatory studies in Latin and Philosophy in his homeland, he obtained surgical training in Viana with two Portuguese surgeons, Manuel de Amorim Dantas, surgeon of the Misericórdia of Viana, and José Custódio da Costa, Surgeon Major of the Regiments of the Province of Minho, of the Royal Hospital and of the Misericórdia of Viana, and Judge Commissioner of the Surgeon Major ( *Cirurgião-Mor*) of the Kingdom. With the first, he studied for two years the *Luz Verdadeira* e



**Fig 1.** Gravura representando a vista da rua dalem da ponte e freguesia de S. Marinha de Arcozelo fronteira a Ponte de Lima (1780). Gomes de Lima M. *Os Estrangeiros no Lima*. Coimbra: Real Officina da Universidade. 1785. Tomo I. Universidade de Coimbra, Arquivo Digital.

*Recopilado Exame de Toda a Cirurgia* (1693) by António Ferreira, a work that “(...) he knew like the Lord’s Prayer” [32] and, with the second, he learned to doubt António Ferreira [33].

He established himself, from 1743, at the age of sixteen, in Porto where he found “*The Art [was] in the most calamitous decadence (...). The practitioners learned by Ferreira*” [34], “*The amputation of a leg or an arm was an impracticable thing, and horrifying to the majority of our Surgeons*” [35] and the surgeons “(...) did not achieve a manual cure here” [36].

The decadence of teaching and surgical practice motivated him to acquire monographs by foreign authors, stating, “*I began to enjoy good literature, provided myself with books from other nations, and sought foreign masters; and I became undeceived [realized] that there was more world than Portugal, and that in matters of Surgery, Portugal was not the most learned Kingdom in the World*” [37]. He had a short stint at the Royal Hospital of All Saints in Lisbon, in the time of the anatomist Bernardo Santucci, and established himself in Porto where he completed his training at the English Hospital, a private assistance institution maintained by the British factory for the local English community. This institution also trained Portuguese surgeons under the guidance of foreign professionals residing in Porto, such as surgeons Henry Nicols and Werton, and where he maintained clinical practice. About the first of

these masters, he expresses his gratitude and affection in this way: “*Of Mr. Henry Nicols, one of the men most loved by me, and in another time my dearest Father and Master (...)*” [38]. At the same time, he participated in Porto’s cultural life, being a member of informal literary and scientific associations.

He may have collaborated in the founding of the Congregation of Good Men of the Parish of Our Lady of Lapa (1751) and maintained an open dialogue with enlightened figures of Porto, such as the orator and politician Diogo de Mendonça Corte-Real, to whom he would later dedicate one of his books. Very early on, he became acquainted with European personalities and professional organizations that ensured his constant updating and valorisation, as expressed on the title page of several of his works when he identifies himself as a Collegian of the Royal College of St. Ferdinand, of the Surgeons of the Royal House of Castile, in the court of Madrid, Member of the Royal Society of Physicians of Madrid, and Member of the Royal Society of Sciences of Seville [39-41].

The founding of the first European scientific societies in the 17th century greatly contributed to the renovating movement of medical knowledge (Table 1):

While a member of the Spanish associations, he witnessed and participated in this scientific exchange and made felt through his writings the need to establish a congenial academy in Portugal, aiming at the valorization of national surgical training and practice.

**TABLE 1.** 1st european scientific academies

1603	<i>Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei (Rome)</i>
1622	<i>Societas Ereunetica (Hamburg)</i>
1652	<i>Accademia Naturae Curiosorum (Schweinfurt)</i>
1657	<i>Accademia del Cimento (Florence)</i>
1662	<i>Royal Society (London)</i>
1666	<i>Académie Royal des Sciences (Paris)</i>
1672	<i>Collegium Curiosum sive Experimentale (Altdorf)</i>
1696	<i>Veneranda Tertulia Hispalense Médico-Química, Anatómica y Matemática (Seville)</i>
1700	<i>Societas Regia Scientiarum (Berlin)</i>
1710	<i>Collegium Curiosum (Uppsala)</i>
1714	<i>Accademia delle Scienze dell' Istituto di Bologna (Bologna)</i>
1724	<i>Academy of Sciences of Saint Petersburg (St. Petersburg)</i>
1734	<i>Academia Medica Matritense (Madrid)</i>
(...) 1744	<i>Academia Cirúrgica Ulissiponense (Lisbon) - ATTEMPT</i>

He became even more motivated when he encountered severe criticisms from internationally renowned scientists such as Marcello Malpighi, Pedro de Regis, Carl Linnaeus, and Andre Goclick, who disregarded nations destitute of such institutions. Marcello Malpighi even stated that “(...) all nations where experimental Academies were not founded were barbarous”<sup>[42]</sup>.

Thus, in 1748, at 21 years of age, he founded the *Academia Cirúrgica Prototipo-Lusitanica Portuense*, following the models of Paris and Madrid. He was Founder, Secretary, Numerical Academician, and Author of the statutes (9-1748) approved by D. João V, with the exception of No. 14/19, which granted its members preference in Surgery Positions in the Provinces of Minho, Beira, and Trás-os-Montes (published in the *Journal Encyclopedico*). The Academy included Numerical Academicians (founders, 14), practicing, and honorary members. The admission of members presupposed admission exams. It was established to organize two solemn annual meetings, weekly sessions, consultations for the Poor, private surgeries, discussion of the appropriate method for treating surgical diseases, drafting of medico-legal opinions, and support in epidemics, among the main initiatives.

Internal disputes for leadership positions, scientific dissidences, and the exclusion of the aforementioned article in the statutes may justify the short existence of this academy<sup>[43, 44]</sup>. In the following year, he

founded with João Carvalho Salazar, Manuel Freire da Paz, and Father João Saraiva Valente the *Real Academia Medico-Portopolitana*, which they titled the *Academia dos Escondidinhos* (Academy of the Hidden Ones) of the city of Porto because they desired discretion, under the protection of the Archbishop of Braga, D. José de Bragança. They defended experimentalism, philosophical eclecticism, and Newton's system, and promoted an international network among members, principally with the Spanish. He was its Secretary, author of the statutes (4-1749) and their remodeling (1751).

According to the Statutes, the creation of this Academy aimed at the “Cultivation of Experimental Medicine, and luster of the Portuguese Monarchy (...)”<sup>[45]</sup>, “(...) to clarify the dark points of Medicine by way of Observation, and for this, it will seek to bring to public light each year a Work with the title of *Zodiaco Lusitano Delphico*, divided into twelve months, each month consisting of a certain number of Observations or Discourses”<sup>[46]</sup> and the construction of a botanical garden and an anatomical theater.

In the first of the thirty statutes, it was stated: “The principal care of the *Academia Medico-Portopolitana* will be the service and honor of God Triune and One; the veneration of His precepts, the benefit of neighbors, the increase of the Medical Faculties and their ministers, following the maxims of Nature, Practical Experiments, and the rational experimental method, abandoning Physical ideas that contradict experience and the phenomena of the *Macrocosm* and *Microcosm*”<sup>[47]</sup>.

In the statutes, the nature of the four classes of academicians is defined—Illustrious, Collectors, Erudite, Experimental (Stats. II-VI); the headquarters of the academy and admission requirements for academicians (Stat. IX); the competencies and attributions required of the president, deputies, secretary, collectors, prosecutor, and the Erudite academician (respectively Stats. X-XV); the periodicity and venue of the meetings of the Governing Board and the academicians (Stat. XVII); the constitution of the 12 circles—Bracarense, Ulyssiponense, Evorense, Placentino, Salmanticense, Matritense, Hispalense, Valentino, Cesar Augustano, Tarraconense, Rousilonense, and Cantabriense—and the 6 half circles—Maderiense, Africano, Brasilico, Oriental, Occidental, and Maritimo (Stat. XVIII); the rules for publication of the academy's works (Stats XIX-XXVII), its end (Stat. XXVIII); and its logo (Stat. XXX)<sup>[48]</sup>.

The Academicians and Ministers appointed for political and economic governance were Dr. Manoel



Freyre da Paz, 1st Physician of the Hospital of Roque Amador and of the Relationship (President); João Sarayva Valente, Theologian (Erudite Academician); Dr. António Pereyra Cortés and Dr. Euzebio da Novoa Sarmiento, Physicians (Deputies); Dr. João de Carvalho Salazar and Dr. Manoel Jose de Almeida, Physicians (Collectors); Licentiate Manoel Gomes de Lima, Collegian of the Royal College of Surgery-Madrid (Secretary); and Licentiate Jeronimo da Costa Pessoa, Pharmacist (Fiscal) [49].

Through Statute XII, we learn what was required of Gomes de Lima as Secretary of the Academy: *“The Secretary (...). Not only will be a subject intelligent in his faculty, but who has notice of Academic styles, principal Idioms of Europe, and a good comprehension of belle letters. He will have in his charge the entire Archive of the Academy, and the obligation to correspond with the Collectors, and Academicians of the Circles, and even with others who may be of utility to the Academy. He will assist in all Boards, both general and particular, with a Vote, like the Deputies and Prosecutor, and will give in them an account of everything that is worthy of notice. He will take the secret Votes, will write succinctly those given by voice; will administer the oath to the Academicians; will read at the beginning of the Boards what was agreed in the past ones; will write the Decrees, Provisions, Letters of supplication to the Prince, and everything else that belongs to his ministry; also he will seal all papers, for which he must have the seals of the Academy”* [50].

Statute XXX describes its Logo: *“The Academy will have for its emblem the Planet Apollo, traversing the Signs of the Zodiac, and below the figure of Medicine, placed over the word EXPERIENTIA, and from its mouth will come the phrase AD ASTRA; implying that by way of experience and observation, one must observe from the concavities of the earth up to the Stars everything that is notable and useful to Medicine”* [51] (Fig. 2).

The *Zodiaco Lusitanico-Delphico* was the first Portuguese medical periodical. This number edited in January 1749 includes a Prologue, a Catalog of the Academicians responsible for the edition, identified with names from Greek mythology—the “hidden ones” (*escondidinhos*)—an inaugural oration by the president, and six clinical observations, one written in Latin and the rest in Portuguese.

In the Prologue, information appears regarding the non-existence in Portugal of this type of scientific association: *“(...) only Portugal fluctuates without remedy, and not without notice; there are in it, and there*

*were, singular Academies, Anonymous Academies, discreet Conferences, and Historical Museums, however never Medical Societies”* [52]. The expressed will is also made known that *“all the Learned of Portugal remit their most notable observations”* [53]. It is also in the Prologue that the designation attributed to this scientific society is explained, the *Academia dos Escondidos* (Academy of the Hidden) of the city of Porto, by indication of its secretary *Podalirio*, pseudonym of Gomes de Lima, because the names of the Porto physicians, surgeons, and pharmacists who contributed to its edition did not appear.

Still in the Prologue, of this first and only number, the choice of the title is explained: *ZODIACO*, *“for being one year what the Sun spends in running the houses of its signs, and one year what the Academy will take in completing the twelve months”*; *LUSITANICO*, *“(...) not for the whole work being in the Lusitanian idiom (...) but to distinguish itself from another French Zodiac (...)”*; and, *DELPHICO*, *“(...) for belonging to Medicine, and Apollo being its patron”*, symbol of revealed wisdom [54]. They intended it to be a document with illuminated knowledge as if it were a scientific oracle. Its cultivators, although heirs of the classical spirit, grounded themselves in reason and science.

In the Inaugural Oration, the president with the pseudonym *Apollo* clarifies the scope of the *Zodiaco* already indicated on the title page of the work: *“We will make this Zodiac Anatomical, discussing Anatomy; Botanical in knowing and giving virtue to Herbs; Surgical in curing Wounds, extirpating Tumors, reducing Fractures and Dislocations; Chemical in reducing natural bodies into artificial ones by impulses of fire; Dendrological describing Trees; Ichthyological anatomizing fish; Lithological speaking on stones; Medical curing diseases; Meteorological making visible and palpable the sphere, referring to mists, meteors, &c; Ornithological reasoning on Birds; Optical exposing the fabric of the eyes, visual potency, microscopes, &c; Pharmaceutical treating remedies and their compositions; and ultimately Zoological knowing and discussing animals”* [55].

Regarding the Observations, the first presents a case of jaundice, the second a violent extraction of afterbirth (secundines), the third a recurrence of breast cancer (Boaventura Duran, Surgeon of Placencia), the fourth a postmortem cesarean with extraction of a live and viable fetus, the fifth the crying (*vagitus*) of the fetus (Robert Bets, physician of Bristol), and the sixth a traumatic wound of the chest (Teotónio da Cunha

Abranches, Surgeon Major of the city and hospital of Viseu). The detailed particulars of the anamnesis, of the medical and/or surgical treatments indicated, and of the bibliographic references offer the reader orientations for clinical practice with the maximum objective of serving the common good and, as they expressed it, “(...) for our glory, the utility of the Kingdom, and the apogee of the Apollonian Faculty” [56]. Regrettably, it was a unique copy. However, it was representative of a promising new vehicle for the transmission of knowledge and the exchange of information among peers.

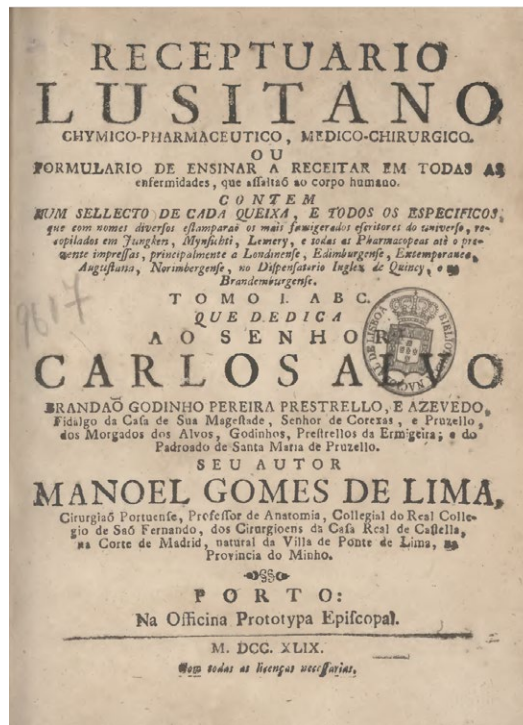
Still in 1749, he publishes the first of three volumes of the *Receptuario Lusitano*, an alphabetical Vade-mecum of diseases in which the young surgeon seeks to uniformize and “Lusitanize” medical terms for the benefit of practitioners and the public good. In this volume, he presents pathologies from A to C (Abortion to Convulsion), in a total of 216 pages, grounding himself mainly in the Pharmacopoeias of London and Edinburgh, in the formulas of respected authors like Johann Jungken, Adrian van Mynsicht, and Nicolas Lémery, and in the “(...) remedies he observed in France, England, and Spain” [57]. It includes Epigrams from family and friends like Saraiva Valente, Carvalho Salazar, Eduardo

Filgueiras, Freire da Paz, Silva Coimbra, and his master José Custódio e Costa, and, among other documents, the license of the *Real Collegio Chirurgico-Matritense* and the censorship of the Physician of the Royal Chamber. All documents annexed to the text, in particular the last two cited, gave credibility to the work and protected the young author. It was dedicated to D. Friar Carlos Alvo, Bishop of Porto, a fact that suggests ecclesiastical patronage. He drafted the second volume which he did not manage to publish. (Fig. 3).

In 1752, at 25 years old, he edits the *Reflexoens Criticas sobre os Escretores Chirurgicos em Portugal* (Critical Reflections on Surgical Writers in Portugal), where he weaves serious criticisms of the *Luz Verdadeira e Recopilado Exame de toda a Cirurgia* authored by the prestigious 17th-century Portuguese surgeon António Ferreira, and where he evidences a wide anatomical and surgical erudition. He considered that this surgeon could not continue to be a reference in the 18th century, given the vastness of the existing surgical arsenal and the authors of anatomical and surgical texts, naturally unknown in his time, and the falsity of his doctrines. Thus, Gomes de Lima states “*That Surgery in Portugal lacks reform. That to know this art perfectly, it is neces-*



**Fig 2.** Logotipo da Real Academia Medico-Portopolitana segundo o seu ESTATUTO XXX por Al.



**Fig 3.** Rosto do *Receptuario Lusitano* (1749). Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa, Arquivo Digital



sary to be more than a 'Ferreirista' [a blind follower of Ferreira]" [58]. He considered himself "a writer, desirous of resuscitating good Surgery in Portugal" [59]. The work was published in Salamanca in the Shop of Eugénio Garcia Honorato and is dedicated to Doctor José Pedro Emaus, Knight professed in the Order of Christ, Noble of the Royal House, of its Dispatch, his Judge, Chancellor, and Governor of Justices in the Relationship of Porto and its district.

Gomes de Lima intended to reflect on other Portuguese surgical authors; however, he explains that he did not continue the *Reflexoens Criticas* because with the edition of that number he had achieved his objective: to make students and practitioners of Surgery aware of the need to know more updated foreign works, to attend conferences given by the Academy, and to practice the most delicate operations. The severe criticism of Ferreira's work implied indicating another author who would serve as a reference and a new method of study. He proposed the *Theoria* of Hermann Boerhaave, prestigious physician and professor at the University of Leiden, and to facilitate its knowledge and learning, he wrote and published *O Praticante do Hospital Convenido* (The Convinced Hospital Practitioner).

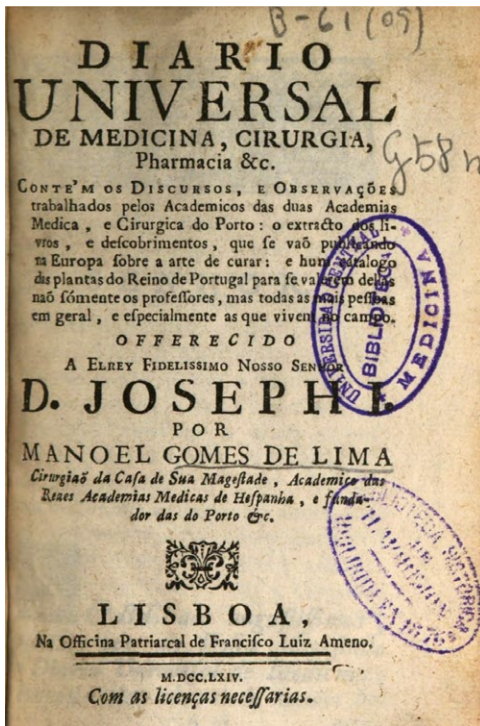
*Dialogo Chirurgico sobre a Inflamação, fundamentado nas Doutrinas do Incomparável Boerhaave* (1756), a work with royal and ecclesiastical approval, in dialogue—similar to that of Ferreira—between the author, an experienced surgeon, and a practitioner, a young defender of classical knowledge—included the exposition of the doctrines of that master and the personal observations of Gomes de Lima, giving notice of scientific and technological advances advantageous to Medicine, namely clinical thermometry and optical microscopy. This work of his is considered his work of greatest scientific and practical value and, at the time, was distributed to libraries such as the National Library of Portugal, the Joanina Library of Coimbra, the Royal of Porto, and that of the College of Surgeons of Madrid, among others. The diffusion of his ideas extended beyond the Lusophone world and, among us, was valued although occasionally contested inconsequentially by some cultivators of traditional doctrines. It was printed in the Episcopal Shop of Manuel Pedroso Coimbra, in Porto, with all licenses and the royal privilege and with a dedication to Diogo de Mendonça Corte-Real, Secretary of State, an enlightened personality, member of the Royal Academy of History [60].

In 1759, at 32 years of age, he founds the *Real Ac-*

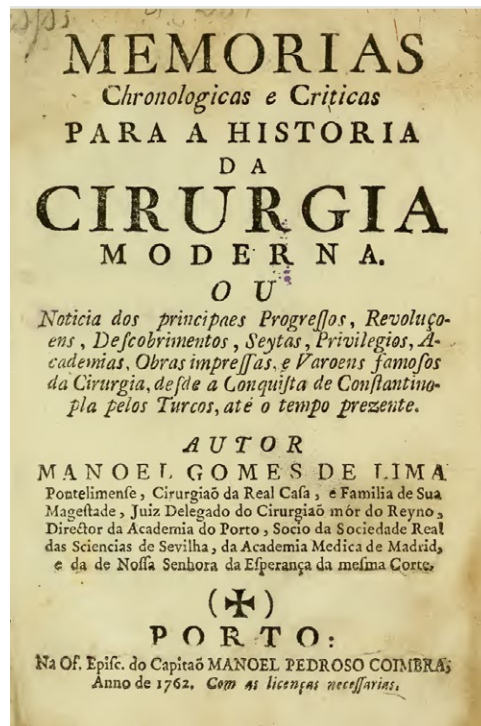
*ademia Cirúrgica Portuense* with the objective of perfecting the theory and practice of Surgery in Portugal, creating a course of anatomy and surgery, producing a compendium of Anatomy and another of Surgery, advertising the memoirs of the academies, inaugurating classes of Anatomy, Surgery, and Obstetric Art, constructing an Anatomical Theater, a Botanical Garden, and the House of Classes, and intervening in case of Plague. He was its founder, director, consultant of Theoretical Anatomy, co-author of the statutes (elaborated 1757, submission 1-1759), and the author of the Orations delivered annually in the solemn sessions from 1760 to 1765 [61]. Within this academy, the second national medical periodical, the *Diario Universal* (1764), appeared. (Fig. 4) It had a monthly edition from January to April which included the Discourses and Observations of the Academicians of the Medical and Surgical Academies of Porto, the news and presentation of discoveries and New Books on the Art of Healing published in Europe, clinical Observations, and an alphabetical Catalog of Plants of the Kingdom of Portugal, for "all other persons in general, and especially those who live in the countryside" [62] and with medical, agricultural, and industrial utilities, fundamentally following the model of the *Flora Hispanica* by Joseph Quer, surgeon of the Royal Chamber and Royal Armies and Royal Professor of Botany at the Royal Garden of Madrid. Gomes de Lima favored the construction and definition of the profession of Surgeon in Portugal and the monopoly of teaching and the labor market in the three provinces (Minho, Trás-os-Montes, Beira).

In the comments on the clinical observations, he makes a constant apology for truth, anatomical studies, and surgical and obstetric practices according to European dictates, making countless references to his personal experience.

Transversal to all his writings, one notes the author's particular attention to and proofs of knowledge about the History of National and International Medicine, especially the History of Surgery. At the beginning of his career, he had committed to writing a History of Surgery, considering it undeniable formative knowledge for practitioners as he expressed: "The great Surgeons, and the great cures, will serve them as an example for a glorious imitation" [63]. Reasons of a professional and personal nature made this project unfeasible; however, Gomes de Lima found a solution: "To at least have some excuse, I converted the History into Memoirs, because recognizing myself without strength, and with-



**Fig 4.** Rosto do *Diario Universal de Medicina, Cirurgia e Pharmacia* (1764). Universidade Complutense de Madrid, Arquivo Digital.



**Fig 5.** Rosto das *Memorias Chronologicas e Criticas para a Historia da Cirurgia Moderna* (1762). Boston Medical Library, Arquivo Digital.

out time, to write the former, I understood that I would not fail to do service to my country, and principally to my art, in bringing the latter to light" [64]. He planned to publish the *History of Modern Surgery* (from the taking of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453 to 1758, the date of the election of the Surgeon-Major of the Kingdom M. Soares Brandão) in eight Periods, two per year. He published the first two up to the time of Fabricius of Aquapendente. He titled this work *Memorias Chronologicas e Criticas para a Historia da Cirurgia Moderna* (1762) (Fig. 5). The main themes addressed were: the Regulation of the Surgeon-Major of the Kingdom; the discord between Physicians and Surgeons of Paris; the presentation of published Surgery Works (Individual works and joint editions of general Surgery works; Works on Pathologies: abscesses, sores, sweating sickness, syphilis, plague, skull fractures, pleurisy; Works on Surgical Techniques and Instruments, general and specific such as for lithotomy and bloodletting); and a general surgical Antidotary and on particular remedies, such as guaiacum (*pau santo*), quicksilver, mercurials, and opium. He indicates and comments on an extensive international bibliography of diverse nationalities, which evidences his vast scientific and surgical literacy,

and cites the opinion of reference personalities in the specialty, many of his time with whom he maintained regular epistolary correspondence [65].

Gomes de Lima attributed the decadence of Medicine in Portugal to six main causes: the Methodology adopted in teaching at the Portuguese university; useless Medical Books; incompetent Professionals; the abundance of empirics and charlatans, a cause of harm; the incompetence and fraud of Apothecaries; and the impunity of those who pass themselves off as professionals [66].

In 1764, at the age of 37, he decides to matriculate in Medicine at the Portuguese University. On June 15, 1765, he performs the Acts of Bachelor of Arts in the Room of Private Exams and, the following day, receives the degree in the university chapel [67]. In the Historical Archive of the University, there are two matriculations in Medicine (1-10-1765 and 1-10-1766) [68, 69], the request for a certificate of years (22-2-1767), the proof of the realization of the 1st and 2nd Attempts, of the Graduation (13-5-1767), and of the approval in Medicine (18-5-1767) [70]. He concluded his medical training at 40 years of age. He benefited from a royal provision (7-1-1765) granting 3 years for the conclusion of the acts. He was aware that



only this graduation would provide him the right to a complete professional practice (Fig. 6 to 9). Upon returning to Porto, he practiced clinical medicine in the city until 1797 at the English Hospital. There is evidence of him having practiced in parallel and episodically at the Hospital dos Clérigos. Among his patients were many with resources, such as the lords of commerce and the nobility of the North and religious figures (consultant to the Convent of Santa Clara of Porto and other monastic houses).

For forty years he was Judge Commissioner of Surgery in Porto (1751-1791). It should be recalled that until 1678, it was the sole and exclusive responsibility of the Surgeon-Major of the Kingdom to evaluate and attribute the status of surgeon in Portugal. From that date, for the convenience of the persons involved and superior determination, commissioners of the Surgeon-Major and the Physician-Major (*Físico-Mor*) and examiners began to be appointed. In the time that Gomes de Lima was judge commissioner of Surgery, a preference for this latter situation is clearly evidenced [71].

Seventeen years after the publication of the *Memorias Chronologicas e Criticas para a Historia da Cirurgia Moderna* (1762), Gomes de Lima resumes this project with the work *Memorias Chronologicas e Criticas para a Historia da Cirurgia* (1779), this time consigning the History of Ancient Surgery which he planned to develop in eight periods. He only edited the first two, from the beginning of the world up to the time of Hippocrates of Kos. He dedicates the text to D. Thomas Xavier Telles da Silva, Minister and Secretary of State, born in Ponte de Lima in the same year as his birth. Once again, he explains the formative relevance he attributes to these historical works: “*The History of Surgery (...) is one of the most important matters, and necessary to our Surgeons. (...) And as from such a substantial lack results considerable damage to the people, and discredit to the Surgery of the Kingdom, I undertook the composition of these Memoirs (...)*” [72]. The first Period comprises the origin of the art of healing, the Ancient Civilizations, and Greco-Roman Antiquity. The second Period describes the Art of healing by the Asclepiads and the Philosophical Schools.

About the Medicine practiced within these Schools, Gomes de Lima states: “*The ancient Philosophers, arrogating to themselves the name of wise men, judged that as such they were permitted the exercise of all arts and sciences concerning Philosophy and natural things. As Medicine is the daughter of experience, of*

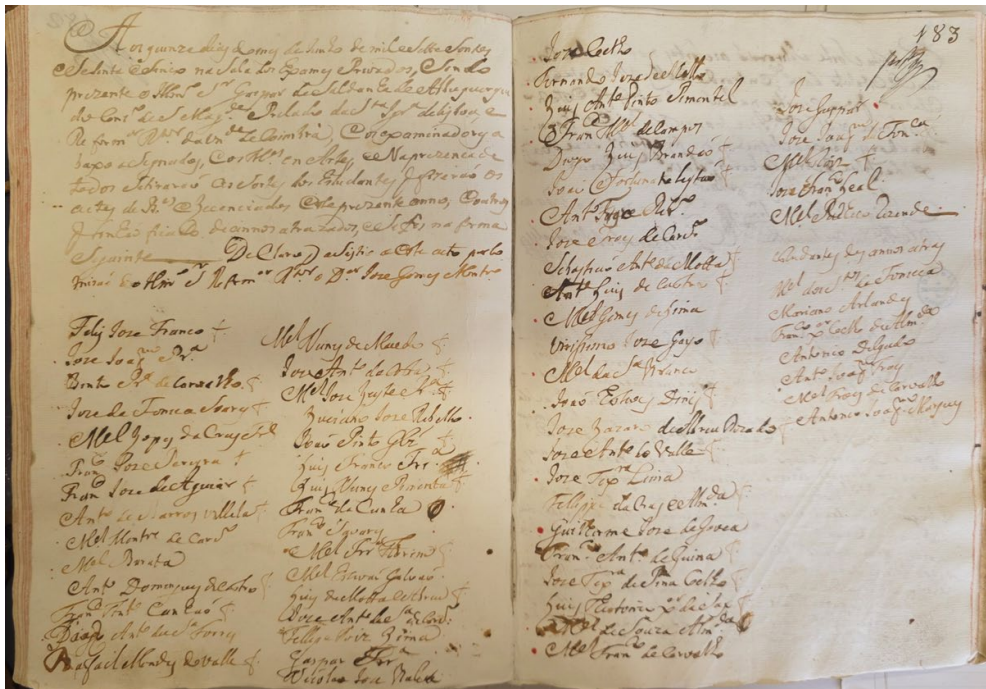
*faithful observation, and of the long practice of curing, and these Philosophers treated few patients and totally dedicated themselves to devising systems, to controversy, and to impugning one another, it is easily gathered that they would not be great Physicians*” [73].

Since 1779, Gomes de Lima was an Honorary Member of the *Sociedade Económica dos Bons Compatriotas Amigos do Bem Público* (Economic Society of Good Compatriots Friends of the Public Good) of Ponte de Lima, an association directed at the promotion of instruction and the stimulation of regional development (Agriculture, Education and Popular Industry, Commerce). Within it, Gomes de Lima also issued Public Health opinions.

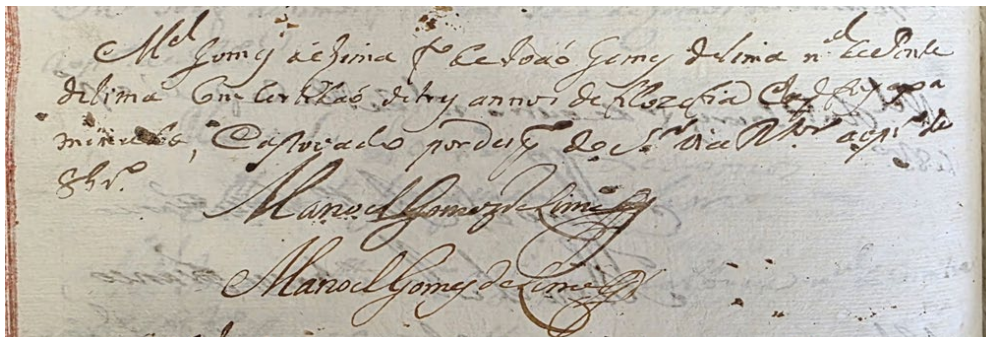
In parallel, from the same year, he was a Corresponding Member of the Royal Academy of Sciences of Lisbon. Both societies defended common principles and aspired to stimulate the Portuguese nobility and clergy to combat economic and intellectual lethargy. The epistolary documents authored by Gomes de Lima (since 1780) directed to the latter society are memoirs of the Limiana Society.

It is to the Royal Academy of Sciences of Lisbon that Gomes de Lima dedicates the work *Os Estrangeiros no Lima* (The Foreigners in Lima) (Volume I, 1785; Volume II, 1791), a work in which he starts from the economic and social context of his homeland and confronts it with other European realities [74, 75]. It is a work where he evidences his profound regional historical and genealogical knowledge, and the will to serve his homeland with his knowledge. He knew how to analyze and name archives and include some oral traditions, today nonexistent or forgotten, despite the methodological limitations at the time and the lack of personal availability.

With the intent of promoting the work and avoiding censorship, he organized the information in an appealing and didactic way, associating more attractive themes with those of lesser interest, introducing engravings, and resorting to the use of fiction with the creation of a virtual academy composed of four foreign members and one Portuguese who interacted in dialogue form: *Raulin*, a French philosopher; *Júlio*, an Italian traveler; *Clarck*, an English merchant; *D. Hugo*, a Castilian scholar in History and Genealogy; and *Lami*—a Gallicism of *Lamy*, anagram of *Lima*—a Portuguese physician. (Fig. 10) Gomes de Lima makes an apology for Experimental Science, Nature, and Natural Philosophy; he articulates the economic and social questions of Ponte de Lima with general Portuguese



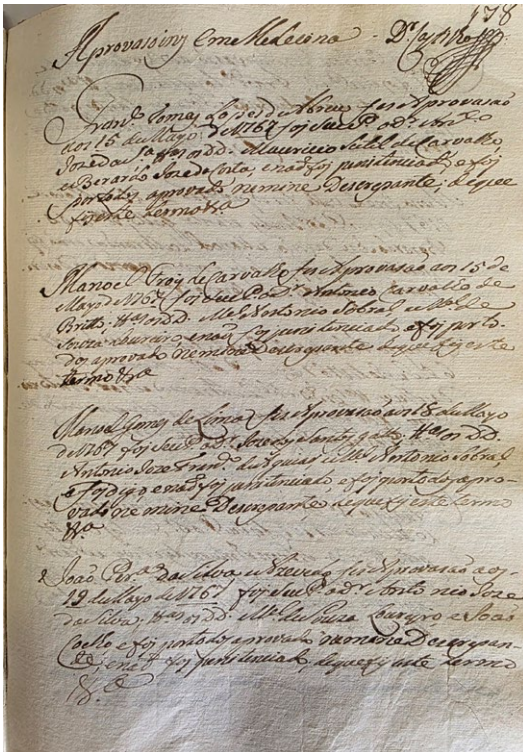
**Fig 6.** Arquivo da Universidade de Coimbra. Obtenção do grau de Bacharel em Artes por Manuel Gomes de Lima (15.06.1765) (DS). Actos e Graus (SR), livro: 1764 –1765, n.º 99 (UI), fl. 183. IV-1a D-1-2-43. Autorizada a cedência da Imagem pelo Arquivo da Universidade de Coimbra.



**Fig 7.** Arquivo da Universidade de Coimbra. Matrícula em Medicina de Manuel Gomes de Lima (01.10.1765) (DS). Matrículas (SR), Livro de matrículas 1764–1765, n.º 82 (UI), fl. 396v. IV-1a D-1-4-35. Autorizada a cedência da Imagem pelo Arquivo da Universidade de Coimbra.



**Fig 8.** Arquivo da Universidade de Coimbra. Matrícula em Medicina de Manuel Gomes de Lima (01.10.1766) (DS). Matrículas (SR), livro 1765 –1766, n.º 83 (UI), fl. 491. IV-1a D-1-4-36. Autorizada a cedência da Imagem pelo Arquivo da Universidade de Coimbra.



**Fig 9.** Arquivo da Universidade de Coimbra. Termo de aprovação em Medicina de Manuel Gomes de Lima (18.05.1767) (DS). Actos e Graus (SR), livro 1766–1767, n.º 101 (UI), fl. 178.IV-1a D-1-2-45. Autorizada a cedência da Imagem pelo Arquivo da Universidade de Coimbra.



**Fig 10.** Gravura representativa da Academia Virtual de *Os Estrangeiros no Lima*. Gomes de Lima M. *Os Estrangeiros no Lima*. Coimbra: Real Officina da Universidade. 1785. Tomo I. Universidade de Coimbra, Arquivo Digital.

and European questions, conveying reforming ideas; he defends Physiocracy (Agriculture as the sole source of wealth), the Mercantilization of the nobility and the magistracy (financing of the State and social mobility), and the idea of merit, recognized by the State, underlying the development of the “useful arts” (arts associated with material progress and not just aesthetic) [76, 77].

## DISCUSSION

From reading the cited writings of Gomes de Lima, we deduce the main objectives underlying his production and publication: the need to publicly evidence the imperfection of the work of António Ferreira, a model surgeon in teaching and assistance during the 17th and 18th centuries, and the need to stimulate self-reflection among his peers; the imperative to adopt a new paradigm, the work of Hermann Boerhaave, already instituted in the Portuguese university; the convenience of showing that Surgery is worthy of being honored and equaled to other parts of the Art of Healing, and of its inseparability from Medicine; and the

obligation to show to other Kingdoms that in Portugal there were already experimental academic congresses and Medicine diaries [78]. This genesis of the first medical-surgical academies preceded and prepared the future organization of Surgical Schools in Portugal, just as the first medical journals authored by him promoted the institutionalization and more consistent affirmation of others. The medical journals were for him a vehicle for the internationalization of Portuguese Medicine, representing a unique personal effort that found continuity only in the following century.

His literary production was varied, ranging from practical manuals to theoretical criticisms, pedagogical syntheses, and historical records within the scope of health and economic, social, and cultural knowledge in the regional and European context. Transversal to the entire work stands out the will to inform, educate, and sensitize regarding the need for constant updating of medical knowledge and practice. The fact that his work was written and utilized medical terminology in Portuguese contributed to the dissemination of knowledge



among those who did not master classical languages.

His writings are the result of having been able to move through various social circles (aristocratic, technical-scientific, and enlightened intellectual), being a mediator between traditional elites and the elite that embraced the new paradigm.

The *Memorias* constitute the first national attempt at writing a history of Surgery, translating a new capacity for reflection on the past by attributing relevance to it for the present and the future, fulfilling the Enlightenment ideology. He did so with recourse to constructive criticism, always with a pedagogical objective. In this context, in 1762, in the first memoirs, he recalls a phrase by Hermann Boerhaave: "(...) no Professor can acquire the knowledge of the art of healing without being fully instructed in the works of his predecessors, (...) in our arts there is nothing more useful nor more interesting" [79].

He was a reformist through the transmission of knowledge conveyed by the academies and medical periodicals he founded and by the original and pedagogical works of which he was the author and, surely, by his practice which aligned with the new paradigm of treatment of surgical diseases that would be cultivated in the following century, exemplified in the contestation of the formation of pus as necessary to the healing process, defending its systematic drainage, and the parsimonious use of bloodletting. He was also a precursor of Ethnopharmacology by studying the therapeutic properties of some natural products.

For the region in which he lived, he is a historical, scientific, and cultural reference. His works evidence his commitment to national and regional progress. The monograph "*Os Estrangeiros no Lima*" continues to be a fundamental research source for knowledge of the collective memory and genealogies of the Lima valley.

At the turn of the 18th to the 19th century, national surgical documentation attests to Gomes de Lima being a reference among his peers. Later, with scientific advancement, his work continued to be an unavoidable historical reference, appearing at the end of the 19th century in works of medical historiography and stimulating others to write about the History of Medicine [80, 81]. Today it continues to arouse national interest, fundamentally regional and academic. Júlio de Lemos in the article *O Limianista Doutor Lima Bezerra* (1948) indicates other cited works of Gomes de Lima of lesser relevance [82].

By decision of the successive Surgeons-Major of

the Kingdom, he was for forty years Delegate Judge in Porto (1751-1791) with the power to examine and certify candidates for surgeon in that district, constituting the highest surgical authority of the Northern region [83]. Possibly between 1758 and 1760, he was appointed honorary surgeon of the Royal House, a title conferred by royal letter of D. José I, a sign of recognition of value and a factor of social promotion. A decree of March 20, 1797, signed by Queen D. Maria I conferred upon him the title of Numerical Physician of the Royal House, a rare distinction for professionals outside the capital, a sign of a reputation that surpassed regional barriers. Lima Bezerra was also honorary physician of the *Relação do Porto* and the *Casa do Porto*, assuming health care for personalities linked to these institutions.

In 1797, he leaves the city of Porto towards his homeland Ponte de Lima, specifically towards the *Quinta do Outeiro*, in Oliveira, Fornelos, a property acquired by him in 1790 and where he spent his last years of life. It possessed a manor house with a chapel and agricultural lands. In 1804, at 77 years of age, already retired, he was graced with the Habit of the Order of Christ, a decoration granted by the Prince Regent D. João (future D. João VI), for services to science and the monarchy.

He was married to D. Isabel Caetana da Divina Providência, and as offspring or remaining family, two sons and possibly daughters or nieces are cited. He had three sisters who died single and three brothers: Domingos Gomes, the judge João Gomes de Lima, and Doctor João António Bezerra de Lima, Royal Professor of Grammar and Latin and Examiner of Students of the University of Coimbra [84]. Gomes de Lima speaks extensively about the latter in "*Os Estrangeiros no Lima*", in Dialogue V, when he speaks of the street beyond the Bridge, where he was born and lived his childhood, to remember a prominent personality associated with the location. He was a brother of the Brotherhood of the Rosary and of N. S. da Luz. He passed away on March 6, 1806 [85]. He is buried in the Chapel of N. S. da Luz, Arcozelo, in Ponte de Lima.

Two of the cities that saw him born and grow decided to attribute his name to one of their arteries, the Rua Manuel Lima Bezerra, formerly Rua Além da Ponte in Ponte de Lima (1904), and another in the neighborhood of the Captains of April in Viana do Castelo (1992). Professor Luís de Pina, while President of the Municipal Council of Porto, introduced the name Manuel Gomes de Lima into the city's toponymy (12-4-1945) [86]. Episodically, he was remembered by the regional press and,



in 1927, on the bicentennial of his birth, the Northern press, like *Comércio do Porto*, remembered his inestimable contribution. In 1992, the facsimile edition of the work *Os Estrangeiros no Lima* is sent to press, an initiative of the Municipal Council of Ponte de Lima, printed by Barbosa and Xavier-Artes Gráficas. On the occasion of the 200 years of his passing, in 2006, the same municipality organized an exhibition and edited a catalog entitled “*Manuel Lima Bezerra – um precursor limiano*”. On the occasion of the 2nd Luso-Galician Congress of the History of Medicine, Gomes de Lima was again remembered in the congress logo, in the opening session, and in the conference then delivered, translated in this writing. Regarding his multifaceted life, dispersed information is expected to exist in the archives of the cities where he lived and the Portuguese and Spanish associations to which he belonged, in the periodicals of the time, and even in European and transatlantic congener institutions that urgently need to be found.

## CONCLUSIONS

Manuel Gomes de Lima Bezerra personifies the ideology of the Age of Enlightenment through critical reasoning, encyclopedic knowledge, eclecticism of interests, and dedication to the public cause. Within national conservatism, he developed criticisms, grounded in observation and experience, which promoted reforms, not so much of the technical aspect, but above all through the attitudes and institutional and cultural initiatives he promoted. He fits into the Peninsular Scientific Elite. He was a pioneer and promoter of experimental Medical Academies and Medical Journalism in Portugal.

The training he acquired and the activities he dedicated himself to as a surgeon, physician, professor, writer, genealogist, and historian of Medicine, profoundly associated with his roots and a network of national and international scientific contacts, created a multifaceted figure who was a reformer and a non-conformist agent of change. He is also a reference in national medical historiography. In 1911, the dichotomy between physicians and surgeons in Portugal would come to an end. Gomes de Lima, two centuries earlier, demonstrated with his surgical and medical training that importance and feasibility, and gave a notable contribution for national surgery to approach European scientific standards and to elevate the social status of the surgeon.

His Legacy is his vast scientific work published on national and international Surgery and Medicine, which he grounded in the past because he had knowledge that allowed him to perceive progress. His intangible Legacy, more than the genesis of a more qualified and updated class of professionals, was the change of mentalities not only in Health and Science but also in the political, economic, social, and cultural sphere of Portugal, preparing the advent of institutions and associations progressively more consolidated and adjusted to national requirements.

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