

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE HOSPITAL FOR CONTAGIOUS DISEASES IN CRAIOVA FROM ITS FOUNDATION UNTIL 1907

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ABSTRACT:

THE HOSPITAL FOR CONTAGIOUS DISEASES IN CRAIOVA WAS FOUNDED RATHER LATE BY THE CITY HALL, AT THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY. UNTIL THEN THE CONTAGIOUS PATIENTS HAD BEEN TREATED IN BARACKS IMPROVISED NEAR THE FILANTROPIA HOSPITAL. AT THE BEGINNING IT FUNCTIONED IN RENTED HOUSES AND IN 1900 THE CITY HALL BUILT A PAVILION FOR THE CONTAGIOUS ON THE DOMAIN SITUATED ON ITS PROPERTY, IN BUCHAREST BARRIER, A PAVILION FOR CONTAGIOUS CHILDREN BEING ADDED IN 1907, FROM PRIVATE INITIATIVE.

KEYWORDS: CONTAGIOUS DISEASES, HOSPITAL, CRAIOVA.

The need for isolating the people who suffered from contagious diseases had been acknowledged for a long time. At the beginning of the 19th century, in 1802, in London, the *Fever-Hospital* was opened for acute contagious diseases and in 1841 the first hospital for people suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis.

In both Romanian Principalities, in the 18th century and in the first quarter of the 19th century temporary hospitals for the plague and typhoid sufferers were opened. The Divan of Wallachia General Assembly wrote in 1830 a *Regulation for Hospitals* in which, at article 48 it was established that when Eforia would dispose of sufficient funds it would build a hospital for contagious diseases, but this *Regulation* was never applied.

By the end of the 19th century more European countries noticed that it wasn't enough to separate the sick from the healthy during epidemic, that building permanent hospitals for isolating the contagious was necessary and every hospital should have enough space to separate the possible sick persons, because at any moment a fever suffering patient could develop a contagious disease. After the hospitals for children had multiplied, permanent services for isolating the patients with contagious diseases became a necessity. However, the process of organising a methodical isolation in general hospitals or in special hospitals was very slow, although it had been studied and recommended ever since the International Hygiene Congress in Paris in 1878, through the memoirs of A. Fauvel and C. Vallin, and the International Hygiene Congress in Wien, in 1887, where C.

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Bolem, Iacob Felix and S.F. Sorensen were rapporteurs. It was considered a necessary discussion point at the International Hygiene Congress in London in 1891 and at the one in Paris in 1900, during which Drovineanu presented complete arguments regarding this matter.

In 1897, only 60 from the 1703 hospitals in France provided isolation services. Germany was the only country who had founded the most numerous hospitals for isolation, small and large, so that at the beginning of the 20th century in the German Empire, every village had at least one isolation room, an isolation pavilion in general hospitals and small isolation houses in most villages.

Romania had a sanitary law which foresaw the isolation of the contagious. In 1898, this law² was completed by the obligation imposed to the Government, to the large hospitals administration, to the larger urban councils, to build hospitals for isolation for certain chronic diseases, besides those existing for the acute diseases, so that between 1895-1900, in most cities and hospitals there were locations for isolating the contagious. Some hospitals had special rooms, others had special pavilions for this. Eforia Hospitals in Bucharest and Ploiesti, Charity, the hospital for children in Iasi, Mrs. Elizabeth Hospital in Galati had pavilions for isolation as well as other 24 county and communal hospitals. The other hospitals in Romania had only one or two isolation rooms.

At the beginning of the 20th century, only 18 of the 33 state rural hospitals had isolation pavilions, in the others the isolation was secured in a separate room. In some cities, among which was Craiova, the City Hall installed a small hospital for isolation in a house adapted for this purpose.

Only two of the hospitals pertaining to the Saint Spiridon House had pavilions for isolation, the Central Military Hospital and those pertaining to the army also had pavilions for isolation.

The persons suffering from leprosy were isolated in Rachitoasa madhouse, but it did not have the best conditions at the beginning of the 20th century and it was necessary to relocate it.

Those having venereal diseases didn't require a severe isolation and were hospitalized in all hospitals.

For the people sick of granular conjunctivitis, besides the four military infirmaries for eye diseases, special pavilions were created, near Pechea and Bujor Hospitals in Covurlui county, these sick people being hospitalized in most units in a separate room.

At the beginning of the 20th century in Romania there weren't hospitals or hospital services for isolating the people who suffered from tuberculosis in an advanced stage, which could not be healed. There was no sanatorium for those suffering from early stages of pulmonary tuberculosis, which had a chance of healing.

Although a higher number of tuberculosis sufferers needed to be hospitalized, the authorities limited their actions to promoting the measures for preventing tuberculosis, which referred to improving general hygiene, getting people accustomed to cleanliness, spreading information about ways of getting infected and ways of preventing it, because the state did not have enough funds to hospitalize all the poor people suffering from tuberculosis in hospitals or in sanatoriums. Not even the German Empire, the state with the most numerous hospitals and sanatoriums, hospitalized all the people who had tuberculosis. As Robert Koch announced in the Congress for combating tuberculosis, held in London in 1901, in Germany there were 226,000 adult people sick of tuberculosis in 1900 and all the German sanatoriums together only had 5,500 beds.

² Iacob Felix. *Istoria igienei în România*, 2nd volume (Bucharest: "Carol Göbl" Graphic Arts Institute, 1902), 42-44.

The only modern hospital for isolating the contagious people in Romania was founded in Sulina, in 1894, by the Danube European Commission³.

The Hospital for Contagious Diseases in Craiova was founded by the City Hall in the autumn of 1896⁴, it had 10 beds and was supported by funds from Craiova City Hall⁵.

At the beginning, this hospital functioned in rented houses which, between 1896 -1899, belonged to Ilie Mihailescu⁶.

On 26th October 1899 the contract for renting the location where the hospital for isolating the contagious was organised expired and the mayor of Craiova announced and invited the owners who had rent houses for this purpose, to present their offer at the City Hall by 1st September 1899, at 10 o'clock in the morning. Their rental was to be established for three to five years⁷.

At the established term, the City Hall received several rental offers⁸.

The owner Ilie Mihailescu, on 1st September 1899, expressed his wish to fore long the rental contract with the City Hall. His houses were located on Sineasca Street, no.30. They contained two buildings with seven rooms, a courtyard and a garden. In one of the buildings the hospital was functioning at the time. Mihailescu requested 900 lei per month as rent, provided that the sum would be paid in one instalment in the first year of the contract and afterwards, in the following years, on semesters⁹.

Eventually, on 13th October 1899 the owner Iorgu Constantinescu offered for rent the house on Fulgului Street, no.2, having three rooms, requesting an annual rent of 300 lei¹⁰.

Before the final rent offer was received, the mayor G.I. Pessicu proposed to the communal counsellor T. Dumitrescu that, together with the M.D. and the chief engineer of the city, they should gather in a commission, to go and examine the properties offered and to give their assent to those which fulfilled the conditions required for being rented as locations for the hospital¹¹.

On 11th September 1899, the commission formed by the communal counsellor T. Dumitrescu, doctor Elie Antonini, M.D. of the city and F.Springer, chief engineer of Craiova, gathered to examine the properties of Constantin D. Streinu on Sineasca Street, no.41, Grigorie Marcu on Cantemir Street, no.57, Lache Nicolae Ion Ciungu on Craiovita Street, I. Theodorescu on Sineasca Street and Ilie Mihailescu on Sineasca Street no. 30.

The properties of Grigorie Marcu on Cantemir Street and that of Lache Nicolae Ion Ciungu on Craiovita street were not found; the houses of Constantin D. Streinu, on Sineasca street, no. 41 were being painted inside and outside, therefore they could not be used until 26th October 1899 and thus were excluded from the list.

The house of I. Theodorescu, on Sineasca street, although in good condition, with tall rooms, was not spacious enough to be used as a hospital because it had only two rooms and a vestibule, as well as two rooms and a vestibule at the basement, but at that moment it didn't have a kitchen.

³ Elena-Steluța Dinu. "Asistența spitalicească a orașului Craiova în a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX- începutul secolului XX". PhD dissertation, Babeș Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, 2014: 201-203.

⁴ Elena-Steluța Dinu. "Hospital in Craiova in the nineteenth century". *Research and Science Today*, Supplement 1(2014): 8.

⁵ Mihai Măldărescu, *Dare de seamă făcută Consiliului Comunal al Craiovei în ședința de la 24 februarie anul 1897* (Craiova: "Rălian and Ignat Samitca" National Printing House, 1897), 14

⁶ National Archives Service of Dolj County, Craiova City Hall fund, The Administrative Service, file 42/1899, f. 3

⁷ National Archives Service of Dolj County, Craiova City Hall fund, The Administrative Service, file 42/1899, f. 4

⁸ National Archives Service of Dolj County, Craiova City Hall fund, The Administrative Service, file 42/1899, f. 4

⁹ National Archives Service of Dolj County, Craiova City Hall fund, The Administrative Service, file 42/1899, f. 14

¹⁰ National Archives Service of Dolj County, Craiova City Hall fund, The Administrative Service, file 42/1899, f. 15

¹¹ National Archives Service of Dolj County, Craiova City Hall fund, The Administrative Service, file 42/1899, f. 5

Whereas the house of Ilie Mihailescu on Sineasca street, where the Hospital for contagious diseases was installed at that moment, had two buildings, the one facing the street, where the hospital was, had three rooms and the one inside the courtyard had two rooms and a vestibule, as well as a spacious kitchen, in a separate body structure, attached to the second house.

After the inspection, the commission considered that both houses belonging to Ilie Mihailescu were a fitted location for the contagious diseases hospital, provided that they were handed over in good condition and that the kitchen was provided with a cooker¹².

On the 26th September 1899, doctor Elie Bazilescu, called “the blue breaking up” doctor, after receiving another rental offer, wrote a report on a house situated in that area of the city and reached the conclusion that the house had been recently built and was unfinished, therefore, a period of at least three months had to pass by until it could be used, according to *The Regulation for construction*, and the three existing rooms were too small. If the hospital were installed in this house, a room would be used by the nurse, the other for the kitchen and the hospital “effects” and the third, the most spacious one, did not have enough volume for ventilating two sick people. Moreover, the courtyard was very small, overgrown and open to the neighbourhood where the houses, very abundant and small, were inhabited by poor workers and each family had between 2 and 7 children. The area was too crowded and insanitary, with unpaved streets and without sewing, in common courtyards and without “latrine” and the trash was spread everywhere. Because of all these factors, the house didn’t comply with the terms necessary for turning it into an isolation house for the contagious people¹³.

Complaints appeared against the owner of the houses on Sineasca street, where the hospital for contagious diseases was. Therefore, on 3rd October 1899, doctor Elie Antonini notified the mayor of Craiova that on 1st October the owner of these houses opened a tavern and even occupied two rooms, so, for the hospital remained only one room. Therefore, the contagious people could no longer be isolated and represented a danger for the healthy people around. That was why doctor Elie Antonini told the mayor that the owner Ilie Mihailescu should be sent to justice and at the same time should be forced to give away the houses from the courtyard by 26th October 1899, because the hospital could not function in that building in just one room¹⁴. Eventually, the renting contract for the estate where the hospital was supposed to function was signed on 15th October 1899 by the City Hall of Craiova and the owner Iorgu Constantinescu¹⁵.

Because the scarlet fever became more and more frequent, threatening to become epidemic in July 1900, the best way to prevent this disease was isolation, as in the case of all contagious diseases, but it couldn’t be done in proper conditions because the house on Fulgului street in which the hospital was installed, was too small and it didn’t fit the purpose, because of its location, in a crowded area of the city, as well as because of the small space it provided for the hospital.

Doctor Elie Antonini, the city M.D., knew that the City Hall of Craiova owned a domain in Bucharest barrier, on which at least three isolation pavilions for different contagious diseases could be built with little expenses. In order to achieve this objective, Antonini asked the mayor to “take the most urgent measures” on 15th July 1900¹⁶.

¹² National Archives Service of Dolj County, Craiova City Hall fund, The Administrative Service, file 42/1899, f. 17-17 verso

¹³ National Archives Service of Dolj County, Craiova City Hall fund, The Administrative Service, file 42/1899, f. 19 verso.

¹⁴ National Archives Service of Dolj County, Craiova City Hall fund, The Administrative Service, file 42/1899, f. 20

¹⁵ National Archives Service of Dolj County, Craiova City Hall fund, The Administrative Service, file 42/1899, f. 22

¹⁶ National Archives Service of Dolj County, Craiova City Hall fund, The Administrative Service, file 42/1899, f. 46

But the Council for Hygiene in Craiova, during the meeting held on 5th July 1900, after debating the matter of scarlet fever cases which had become more frequent, voted that only the scarlet fever cases should be treated in the hospital for contagious diseases, the other people suffering from different contagious diseases being given a shack at *Filantropia Hospital*. At the same time, they demanded that the hospital doctors would be announced that the people suffering from scabies could not be sent to the Hospital for contagious diseases, but to the shack at Filantropia Hospital, and in the case scarlet fever became epidemic, they requested the city to rent another location because the three rooms of the hospital were not enough¹⁷.

Therefore, the Council for Hygiene in Craiova didn't consider necessary to build a new quarters for the hospital.

Eventually, the City Hall became aware of the necessity to build a pavilion for contagious diseases on the field located at the city outskirts, in Bucharest barrier, and in July 1900 approved the execution of this pavilion and of a place for the intendant, the servants and the kitchen of this hospital, their value reaching 17938, 90 lei for the 20 beds pavilion and 7382, 75 lei for the dwelling body structure.

The chief engineer of the city thought, on 28th July 1900, the works could be finished by 26th October 1900, when the contract of the firms hired for this purpose expired; only if they were executed by direct management and the work was began at once¹⁸.

According to the estimations of architect F. Springer in July 1900, the expenses for the construction of the pavilion for the contagious diseases reached the sum of 17938, 90 lei. In the same estimate it was mentioned that 37 wainscots were needed, made of fir planks and valuing 476, 25 lei¹⁹. Until 1st September 1900 the expenses for which the mayor had to pay, reached the sum of 6870, 60 lei²⁰.

The work was executed under direct administration by the Technical Service of Craiova and was not given to an entrepreneur. The construction materials were delivered directly from the factories and warehouses. Thus, on 29th September 1900, the chief engineer of the city gave the mayor a contract, duplicated, valuing 2202 lei, for the timber supplied by T. Raux, the owner of the sawmill in Slatina²¹. The manual labour was paid to the masons, the carpenters and to the other workers, on executed pieces, therefore there was no need to sign contracts.

Although it was necessary to open immediately the new hospital for contagious diseases, the city M.D., doctor Elie Antonini considered that on 17th November 1900 only one casualty ward was dry enough to be occupied²².

According to the minutes elaborated by the communal counsellors Th.P.Dumitrescu and Constantin Stravolea, together with Constantin C.Țapardea, chief engineer of the First District for bridges and roads and P.Radovici, chief engineer of the commune, appointed by the City Hall to run the reception of the Pavilion for contagious diseases and that of the "economat", executed by the Technical Service of Craiova, the following have been observed:

- 1) The Pavilion had 36,70 metres length and 8,70 metres width
- 2) The "Economat" had 12, 2 meters length and 10 meters width.

¹⁷ National Archives Service of Dolj County, Craiova City Hall fund, The Administrative Service, file 42/1899, f. 47

¹⁸ National Archives Service of Dolj County, Craiova City Hall fund, The Administrative Service, file 42/1899, f. 48

¹⁹ National Archives Service of Dolj County, Craiova City Hall fund, The Administrative Service, file 42/1899, f. 49-49 verso

²⁰ National Archives Service of Dolj County, Craiova City Hall fund, The Administrative Service, file 42/1899, f. 57

²¹ National Archives Service of Dolj County, Craiova City Hall fund, The Administrative Service, file 42/1899, f. 59

²² National Archives Service of Dolj County, Craiova City Hall fund, The Administrative Service, file 42/1899, f. 78

Both buildings had been made from solid brick masonry and the walls had the width of a brick and were covered with sealed sheet. The highest quality material had been used for the construction and the execution of the plaster, carpentry works, etc. was also very good. The Commission suggested that the reception could be done and that each ward should have its own entrance and “latrine”. At the same time, they recommended that in the summer of 1901 the construction of the buildings necessary for the pavilion should continue and the courtyard and the garden should be surrounded by alleys and tree plantations²³.

However, the ground surrounding the buildings of the hospital for contagious diseases hadn't been levelled by 3rd December 1900 and because of that the rain water was languishing at the foundation of these buildings, making possible for damp to appear, even before being used. That was why doctor Elie Antonini asked the mayor to give urgent, strict orders on 3rd December 1900 so that this work wouldn't be neglected in the future²⁴.

Doctor Bazilescu, the physician of the hospital for contagious diseases, as well as the intendant- surgeon A. Petrescu, reminded the M.D. of Craiova on 19th February 1902 about the necessity to enclose the hospital because the parents and the relatives of the sick people invaded the hospital at any time, thus preventing the doctors from unfolding their activity in good conditions, as they could no longer apply isolation measures. The only way in which they could be stopped from getting inside the hospital was to enclose it and equip it adequately.

The demands were motivated by the fact that between 1901-1902 the sum of 3000 lei was allocated for making improvements to this hospital²⁵.

This issue had been neglected for half a year. On 21st September 1902 the chief engineer of the city gave the mayor an estimate of 1371, 66 lei for constructing the hospital fence and on that day the chief engineer of the city announced that he had the approval for lime washing the hospital, work which had already been done²⁶.

However, the hospital still needed improvements because enclosing the hospital wasn't achieved even by 1st August 1902²⁷.

For disinfection, which was absolutely necessary to the hospital for contagious diseases, the city M.D. asked the mayor to purchase a carbolic acid atomiser and a disinfection device that costed approximately 80-90 lei²⁸.

The M.D. of the city, doctor Elie Antonini asked the mayor to approve the purchase of under linen for the twelve hospital beds and also requested that the construction works for the hospital should be done through direct management before getting the Council vote²⁹, because at that moment the hospital had many inconveniences and flaws which the doctors repeatedly presented to the city administration, but they were too occupied with other matters to pay attention to them.

On 1st May 1902 things seemed to get better as the Technical Service of the city elaborated with the M.D. a plan for transforming the hospital. This plan did not exceed the sum of 2000 lei, according to the agreement with the mayor during the elaboration of the budget project. At the

²³ National Archives Service of Dolj County, Craiova City Hall fund, The Administrative Service, file 42/1899 , f. 84 – 84 verso

²⁴ National Archives Service of Dolj County, Craiova City Hall fund, The Administrative Service, file 42/1899 , f. 85

²⁵ National Archives Service of Dolj County, Craiova City Hall fund, The Administrative Service, file 97/1902, f. 4

²⁶ National Archives Service of Dolj County, Craiova City Hall fund, The Administrative Service, file 97/1902, f. 10

²⁷ National Archives Service of Dolj County, Craiova City Hall fund, The Administrative Service, file 97/1902, f.6

²⁸ National Archives Service of Dolj County, Craiova City Hall fund, The Administrative Service, file 97/1902, f. 8

²⁹ National Archives Service of Dolj County, Craiova City Hall fund, The Administrative Service, file 97/1902, f. 9

same time the mayor of Craiova assured people that soon he was going to open a public auction for commissioning the works³⁰.

Thus, on 18th July 1903, engineer F. Springer announced the mayor of the city that for the transformation works of this hospital he received only two offers: from N. N. Frostineanu with a 5% discount under the unitary price of the estimate and the offer of entrepreneur D. Barbatescu with 0,70% discount under the unitary price of the estimate³¹.

In 1904 it was decided that the transformation of the hospital for contagious diseases should be done under the management of entrepreneur D. Barbatescu³².

On 15th June 1905, out of the initiative of the ladies in Craiova, representatives of the societies "*The Independence Hospital*" and "*The Ant*", it was decided that a Pavilion for the children sick of contagious diseases should be built at the hospital in Bucharest barrier³³.

Sofia Caneciu, as representative of these societies received thanks from the City Hall of Craiova for this initiative. Therefore, on 28th February 1906, she was announced that during the meeting on 15th June 1905, the Communal Council of Craiova gratefully welcomed the ladies' decision to build a pavilion for the children suffering from contagious diseases, on the domain belonging to the City Hall, in Bucharest barrier, where an analogue building already existed, and to offer this pavilion to Craiova in order to be used during epidemic outbreaks. During the scarlet fever between 1901-1904 the Hospital for Contagious diseases didn't dispose of enough space. In 1906 another 10 spare rooms were added, each having two beds.

After the chief of the Technical Service in Craiova together with Elena Cornetti and the chief engineer of the city went to the location and suggested the place where the pavilion had to be installed, the societies *The Independence Hospital* and *The Ant* were authorized to begin the works in order to accomplish the projected philanthropic purpose³⁴.

The hospital's furniture was completed through donations³⁵.

The opening ceremony of the Pavilion for the children suffering from contagious diseases was held on 17th June 1907, at 11 o'clock in the morning.

The representatives of the Ladies of Craiova Committee, Maria Coloni and Elena Cornetti notified the president of the Interim Commission within the City Hall of Craiova that this Pavilion, built in the previous year by the Society of the Ladies from Craiova of the "Independence no.1" Hospital and the "Ant" society, on the City Hall domain in Bucharest barrier, was remaining under the property of Craiova City Hall³⁶.

After participating at the opening ceremony of the Pavilion for contagious children organised by the ladies from Craiova, Constantin Dianu asked the president of the Interim Commission, in July 1907, to order "what was needed for the furniture stock-taking and functioning of this pavilion"³⁷, which actually happened on 4th July 1907.

³⁰ National Archives Service of Dolj County, Craiova City Hall fund, The Administrative Service, file 49/1903, f. 13.

³¹ National Archives Service of Dolj County, Craiova City Hall fund, The Administrative Service, file 104/1903, f. 1-2

³² National Archives Service of Dolj County, Craiova City Hall fund, The Technical Service, file 29/1904, f. 1.

³³ National Archives Service of Dolj County, Craiova City Hall fund, The Administrative Service, file 109/1905, f. 4.

³⁴ National Archives Service of Dolj County, Craiova City Hall fund, The Administrative Service, file 130/1906, f. 2

³⁵ National Archives Service of Dolj County, Craiova City Hall fund, The Administrative Service, file 136/1906, f. 1

³⁶ National Archives Service of Dolj County, Craiova City Hall fund, The Administrative Service, file 136/1906, f. 5

³⁷ National Archives Service of Dolj County, Craiova City Hall fund, The Administrative Service, file 136/1906, f. 5

On 31st August 1907, the city M.D., Antonini, warned the mayor that in case of cholera it was absolutely necessary that the hospital for contagious diseases owned at any moment 20 functional beds, that was why the purchase of hospital objects was urgent³⁸.

Among the doctors from this hospital, doctor Aureliu Metzulescu (1873-1948) distinguished himself, unfolding a dedicated activity within the hospital between 1906-1935³⁹.

We can conclude that the foundation of The Hospital for Contagious Diseases in Craiova was welcomed because the situation of the contagious diseases at the end of the 19th century- the beginning of the 20th century was difficult in Romania, since the caution measures had been neglected, those who became sick did not follow the prescribed diet, reaching serious complications, many of them presenting to the doctor too late. At that period of time a treatment against infections had not been discovered. However, prevention vaccination was used and specific serotherapy, although they had been experimented for a short while and a rigorous scientific methodology did not exist.

³⁸ National Archives Service of Dolj County, Craiova City Hall fund, The Administrative Service, file 136/1906, f. 27

³⁹ Mariana Leferman *et al.*, editor. *Repere spirituale românești. Un dicționar al personalităților din Dolj* (Craiova: Aius Publishing House, 2005), 206.

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