

The School of Medicine and Surgery of Pará, Brazil: from establishment to federalization, 1919-1950

A Faculdade de Medicina e Cirurgia do Pará: da fundação à federalização 1919-1950

La Facultad de Medicina y Cirugía de Pará, Brasil: de la fundación a la federación 1919-1950

José Maria de Castro Abreu Junior

Hospital Universitário João de Barros Barreto, Universidade Federal do Pará, Belém, Pará, Brasil

ABSTRACT

This study aims to chronologically present circumstances that took place from the establishment of the School of Medicine of Pará, Brazil, in 1919 to its federalization in 1950. Some historical facts are highlighted, contextualized, and compared to similar institutions and personalities that played a relevant role in these events, which have been obscured over time. Our intention is to relive the period through words when the School of Medicine of Pará was an isolated medical school in the extreme north of the country. It was the only one of its kind in the region that faced sanitary challenges, which are still far from being overcome today.

Keywords: History of Medicine; Schools, Medical; Health Services.

Medical education in Brazil dates back to 1808 with the migration of the Portuguese court to its most important colony. The migration took place because of Napoleon's troops invading Portugal. John VI of Portugal created the two *Escolas de Anatomia, Medicina e Cirurgia* (Schools of Anatomy, Medicine and Surgery) in February and November of that year in reply to a request from José Correia Picanço the Baron of Goiana, who was a surgeon born in Pernambuco and professor of Anatomy and Surgery in Coimbra. The first school was built in the city of Salvador and the second in Rio de Janeiro. In 1813, these schools were named *Academias Médico-cirúrgicas* (Medical-Surgical Academies); in 1832, both were raised to the level of *Faculdades de Medicina* (Medical Schools)¹.

During the Portuguese empire, medical education remained public. It was not until the Republic proclamation and after support was garnered from the 1891 Constitution that other medical schools began to emerge from private initiatives. The third school started in 1898 in the city of Porto Alegre². However, the stimulus for medical education expansion in Brazil happened in the 20th century, specifically in 1911. The *Lei Orgânica do Ensino* (Organic Law of

Education) was established by Decree N. 8.659 of April 5, 1911; it became known as the *Rivadavia Corrêa Law* in honor of its author. The law was extremely liberal and positivist, and provided total didactic and administrative autonomy to the higher education institutions³. Thus, the following institutions were created: The *Faculdade de Medicina de Belo Horizonte* (School of Medicine of Belo Horizonte) in 1911⁴; The *Faculdade de Medicina Hahnemannianna* (Hahnemannian School of Medicine) in Rio de Janeiro³, with an emphasis on homeopathy⁵; the *Faculdade de Medicina de São Paulo* (School of Medicine of São Paulo)⁵; and the University of Paraná, which offered the medicine and surgery courses⁶. The three latter schools emerged during 1912[†].

The *Rivadavia Law* was so liberal that it enabled the emergence of the aforementioned schools, as well as for-profit institutions[‡]. The Federal Government tried to reverse this situation by issuing Decree N. 11.530, of March 18, 1915, which is known as the *Maximiliano Law*. This law required the institutions to maintain a program that was similar to that of official ones. In other words, all medical schools had to have a curriculum that was based on the programs of the Schools of Medicine of Rio de Janeiro and Bahia³.

Correspondence / Correspondência / Correspondencia:

José Maria de Castro Abreu Junior
Trav. Mauriti, nº 2218. Bairro: Pedreira
CEP: 66087-680 Belém-Pará-Brasil
Tel.: +55 (91) 3226-0337/9982-3152
E-mail: josemcajr@yahoo.com.br

* Later, the education turned back to allopathy under the name of School of Medicine and Surgery of Rio de Janeiro. Currently, it is linked to the Uni-Rio³.

† We decided to mention only the medical colleges that still exist, i.e., that survived. We did not mention the ones that closed such as those in São Paulo, Rio Grande do Sul, and the Medicine Course of the Manaus Autonomous University⁶.

‡ There is the reference to the emergence of institutions such as the International School and University that offered long-distance courses in several knowledge areas including medicine⁶.

It is under this more restrictive new legislation that the *Faculdade de Medicina do Pará* (School of Medicine of Pará) was created on January 9, 1919⁸. In contrast to other schools of the time, which emerged in an economically favorable period, due largely to the coffee⁵ and mate⁶ economies, the School of Medicine was created in a moment of local economic decadence caused by the rubber crisis; this economic cycle marked the so-called Amazonian *Belle Époque*⁷.

In addition, another peculiarity marked the creation of the School of Medicine of Pará; unlike the other schools, whose founders were prominent local physicians, a dentist, Antônio Magno e Silva, professor and director of the *Escola de Odontologia do Pará* (Dentistry College of Pará), founded the first medical school in the Amazon, which was created in 1914⁸. Magno e Silva was also the director of the *Associação Científica* (Scientific Association), an institution that had founded and supported the Dentistry College⁹.

Magno e Silva searched for support among physicians such as Hermógenes Pinheiro, Evaristo Silva, Carlos Arnóbio Franco, Álvaro Gonçalves, and Renato Franco¹⁰. Once together, they invited Camilo Henriques Salgado Junior¹¹ to be the director of the School. This was inevitable; Camilo was one of the most prestigious physicians in Pará during the first decades of the 20th century, and was well known in all social circles. Camilo would subsequently play an integral role in aggregating knowledge and establishing the college's credibility. He accepted the idea but not the direction; he nominated Antonino Emiliano de Souza Castro, The Baron of Anajás, for the position¹¹.

The Baron was part of a generation of physicians, prior to Camilo, who built their careers during the time of the Empire. He had even been vice-governor of the Pará province under that regime. Camilo did not nominate the Baron only because of his credibility and respect. The Baron of Anajás was the father of a namesake physician who was better known as Dr. Souza Castro. Dr. Castro was one of the College's founding members and was also a militant for the same political party as Camilo Salgado. At that time, he was an ascending politician and, in the following year, he became State Governor¹². Therefore, the director of the newly created College was not an old representative of an ancient regime, rather he was the father of the future governor of Pará. This fact tied the College to public power at a time when support was needed¹³.

The classes were initially scheduled to start on April 3 but were postponed due to the benevolent attitude of the College directors. The directors may have been searching for candidates and accepting those who had already graduated without requiring an entry exam. With 58 enrolled students, the first classes took place on May 1st, 1919 in the great hall of the Paes de Carvalho School. The newspapers from that time referred to that event as a simple ceremony for a select audience¹⁴. The Baron of Anajás inaugurated the session and concisely explained the advantages the new School of Medicine would bring to Pará and to "the development of Science and to the humanitarian work". He then gave the floor to the official speaker of the ceremony, Dr. Acylino de Leão, whose speech was reproduced as follows:



Source: O Estado do Pará, May 4, 1919.

Figure 1 – Founding members of the School of Medicine and Surgery of Pará

⁸ The name School of Medicine and Surgery of Pará appeared in the 1920s¹³.

¹¹ Physician from Pará, born in 1874 and died in 1938. He began the medicine course in Bahia and graduated in Rio in 1896. He is known as a popular saint in Belém¹³.

"... explained that the major problem in Brazil was the soil occupation, which is evidence of the abandonment of our sertões (backlands) whose populations are left to the influence of witches and medicine men, and considered the action of the medical science the solution for that problem, by bringing resources to those areas. Furthermore, the idea of the School of Medicine of Pará supports that theory, whose fruits are most precious. He shows that we need physicians, men of science who bring their activities to the interior of the country, redeeming those populations from witchcraft, caring for the health of those who work. He says that practice has demonstrated that the doctors who graduated in Colleges of the south of the country mostly go to São Paulo, Minas and other capital cities where there is wealth and a profitable future, and so, he adds, only those graduated here could look after the countryside, motivated either by the work, by love to their home or by the family bonds that hold them there. He gave a historical background of what the *Faculdade de Medicina do Rio de Janeiro* (School of Medicine of Rio de Janeiro) was like ten years ago, where he, the speaker, had graduated, showing that we were able to offer the same physicians as those who graduated from that School. He showed that, at that time, there were several failures, that the medical chemistry was rudimentary, the bacteriology was superficial and even that anatomy, which is the main basis for the medical science, was deficient, in view of the great number of students at the *Faculdade de Medicina*. Nevertheless, there were decent physicians graduated by that Rio de Janeiro College. He explains in details that a successful medical career lies on hospital practice and that, under those conditions, we could have excellent graduates. He adds that the uproar is natural and mentions the foundation of the Law School that provoked a lot of

controversy and questions – Why do we need so many lawyers? However, in a little time that School is proving its profitable result. In the countryside, where judges were always laymen and even illiterates, we can nowadays replace them by skilled graduates of the Law School. This is the role reserved to the School of Medicine of Pará, whose program he had just presented. He also says that Brazil complains about agronomists and asks, "How can we grow if those strong arms are not cared by the hands of medicine?"¹⁵

The ceremony ended at eleven o'clock with the sound of the Firemen's band; after the celebrations, the first regular class took place on May 6. This class, on Natural History and Parasitology, was given by Professor Caribé da Rocha.

Soon, the Baron established the first bylaw of the College, which was based on the model from the *Faculdade Nacional de Medicina* (National Medicine College) of Rio de Janeiro and ordered from Bruno Lobo⁴, a physician from Pará who lived in Rio, slides of normal and pathological histology, as well as collections of mineralogy and zoology for the Natural History classes^{16,13}.

This was the beginning of a period marked by great instability in the newly created School. Once the initial euphoria was over, several professors, due to lack of remuneration or even of skills, started to resign; others, such as Prisco dos Santos and Renato Chaves¹³, started to go from one discipline to another and often assumed multiple simultaneous positions to keep the College active.

The classes were taught in a precarious physical area. The theoretical classes were taught in two rooms of the Paes de Carvalho School facing João Diogo Street, and the anatomy practical classes were held at the City Mortuary in front of the Ver-o-Peso Market¹³.



Source: O Estado do Pará, May 4, 1919.

Figure 2 — The Baron of Anajás (seated at the center) and students from the School of Medicine and Surgery of Pará, Brazil

⁴ Professor of Microbiology at the National Medicine College and Director of the National Museum¹⁶.

Teaching was very strict, with a high rate of failures, which was not an exclusive characteristic of the School of Medicine of Pará. Every new medical school that was created during the Old Republic attempted to gain respect from the Ministry of Justice and Interior Relations by proving that it was not a "diploma mill". According to Camilo Salgado, this moralistic criterion created at least one embarrassing situation¹⁷.

After a high number of failures in Microbiology, Anatomy, and Histology at the end of March 1922, the students felt persecuted and tried to get support from the director Baron of Anajás. He publicly expressed his opinion that no student should fail; the examiners stood firm on their deliberations but felt disrespected and searched for support with Camilo Salgado who was in favor of the professors. The Baron, as expected, felt his authority was threatened and left his post and the College¹⁸. Camilo Salgado took over the lead of the institution and remained as its director until his death in 1938.

The students started to complete the basic disciplines. In an attempt to put them in contact with patients, Camilo soon signed a partnership with the *Santa Casa de Misericórdia* Public Hospital, which charged the School a fee to use its facilities. In the case that the School ever closed, its assets would be donated to that hospital.

Noticing that the School of Medicine of Pará needed its own headquarters, Camilo Salgado launched a strong campaign on January 1, 1923 in an attempt to get donations for a new building. The place that was chosen was the Santa Luiza Palace, which belonged to Mr. Adolph Kolb. Since 1900, the palace had been rented by the State

Government as the "Wenceslau Braz" Elementary School. This was a good opportunity because the State Government was losing interest in the building, which was considered inadequate for an elementary school. In addition, the rubber crisis provoked a decrease in real estate prices¹³.

The newspapers started to publish extensive lists of donors, ranging from ordinary people to retailers, professionals, military and religious figures, and even big companies such as banks, pharmacies, and manufacturers. Everyone contributed diverse amounts. The donations crossed the borders of Belém city, and contributions were reported from several other cities and even from other states. During the same period, some professors gave up their salaries because of the campaign¹³.

With the massive support of the population, the School was able to buy its own building in June of 1923, and, after some reforms, it moved to Largo de Santa Luzia permanently on April 1, 1924¹³.

In the old printed materials from the School of Medicine and Surgery of Pará, there is a reference to the dates of foundation and installation, as well as to the day it was declared equivalent to the Public Schools by the Ministry of Justice and Interior Relations on September 4, 1924. This was not unexpected, because the equivalence represented the recognition of the School of Medicine by the Federal Government. Consequently, it also represented the recognition of the graduates' diplomas in the entire country. Being on the same level as the other federal schools, the medicine schools of Rio and Bahia, was vital to the survival of any institution¹³.



Source: Report of the year 1944 presented to the Congregation by Director Ayclino de Leão. Belém, Pará.

Figure 3 – The School of Medicine and Surgery of Pará in 1924, right after the course was transferred to Santa Luzia Palace

It is important to highlight that the equivalence was not absolute and had to follow strict rules, which included the possibility of annulling a granted equivalence status. The School of Medicine and Surgery of Pará was granted the equivalence status in five years, which was a short time when compared to the time other medical schools of that period took (from 7 to 10 years)¹³.

Some attenuating facts were added to the process of equivalence of the School of Medicine of Pará. The law, for example, required a federal inspector to audit the program in compliance to its congeners; that inspector could not have affinities of any kind with the director or professors, and, if possible, should not live in the same city. Our inspector was a physician who worked at *Santa Casa*. Such benevolences were the result of the friendship between Camilo Salgado and the Senator Lauro Sodré, who was very close to the Baron of Ramiz Galvão. Galvão was an important member of the *Conselho Superior de Educação* (Brazil's Superior Education Council) at that time and the first Dean of the newly created *Universidade do Brasil*. It was not random that the first federal inspector assigned for the College was Dr. Lauro Sodré Filho¹³.

The College, now properly equipped, graduated the first students. From the initial 58, only four survived the strict approval system: Antônio Magno e Silva, the aforementioned "mentor" of the School of Medicine, who was a professor and director of the Dentistry School at that time; Bianor Penalber, journalist of the "Estado do Pará" newspaper and the "A Semana" magazine; Honorato Remígio de Castro Filgueiras, who was originally from Ceará and had studied at the *Faculdade Nacional de Medicina* (National Medicine College) in Rio de Janeiro. He transferred to Belém in the 4th year; and Hipolyto Carelli, a Greek student. Bianor Penalber and Magno e Silva defended their doctorate theses entitled, "Contribuição ao estudo do tratamento da filariose (Contribution to the study of Filariasis treatment)" and "Etiopatogenia das cirroses do fígado (Etiopathogenesis of liver cirrhosis)", respectively, on April 14th, 1925. On April 16th, Honorato Filgueiras presented the theme "Docimasia Pulmonar – Método Icard Dávilla (Pulmonary Docimasia - Icard Davilla's Method)", and on April 18th, Hipolyto Carelli defended the theme "Higiene da tuberculose entre nós (Tuberculosis Hygiene Among Us)"¹³.

The College experienced difficulties in the 1930s and ended the year in debt several times¹³. During these times, the College relied on donations from its faculty¹³. With the money granted through Lauro Sodré in 1932, the school was able to build an amended building with a great hall to

host congregation meetings. Around 1937, the Santa Luzia Palace was renovated; the *art nouveau* characteristics diminished as more modern with an *art déco* aspect became more prevalent.

In 1938, the institution began a new phase after the death of Camilo Salgado who had been the director since 1922. The institution was better financially organized and could expand with new pavilions during the 40s; on the other hand, the relationship between the students and the College was gradually deteriorating because of frequent tuition increases. The mediator was Dr. Olimpio da Silveira**, who had been secretary of the College since the beginning of the 1920s. Dr. Olimpio controlled the finances by saving every coin. He was always fighting for what he considered to be fair for the school, sometimes reaching to extremes¹⁹.

The *Diretório Acadêmico de Medicina* (Medicine Academic Board) (DAM) launched a campaign to help the College be expropriated by the Federal Government and become public. This was a tough challenge and the main focus for several leaderships of the DAM. For years, its president, including important student leaders like Abraão Levy, Pedro Amazonas Pedroso, and Jean Bittar, prioritized this issue¹³.

While the federalization draft bill was slowly advancing for approval, the College, under the direction of Lauro de Magalhães, opened the new anatomy hall in 1940. It was called the Camilo Salgado hall. In 1949, an auditorium with two hundred and fifty seats was opened; it was described as the most modern auditorium in Belém at the time. In 1950, a vivarium was opened in addition to the cornerstone of the *Instituto de Higiene* (Hygiene Institute), the current *Núcleo de Medicina Tropical* (Tropical Medicine Center), that had already been set. This decade marked the period of strongest physical expansion of the School of Medicine, cada como o maior período de expansão física da Escola¹³.

After approximately ten years of fights and negotiations, President Dutra signed Law N. 1.049 on January 3rd, 1950. This law federalized the School of Medicine and Surgery of Pará. The students were finally free from tuition fees, and the professors, who were now elders and had been working in the institution since the school opened were entitled to a retirement program¹³.

Moreover, the College closed a chapter as an institution and opened a new one with the federalization. New faculty were employed replacing the generation of 1919, and the students would begin another challenge that marked the following years: the creation of the University of Pará.

** Olimpio Cardoso da Silveira (1879-1968) from Sergipe graduated in Bahia and had lived in Pará since 1906.

†† After Camilo Salgado's death, until 1950, the College had the following directors: Lauro de Magalhães (1938-1943); Acylino de Leão (1944-1946); Lauro de Magalhães (1947-1954)¹¹.

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RESUMO

As circunstâncias havidas desde a fundação da Faculdade de Medicina do Pará até sua federalização são apresentadas numa perspectiva cronológica seguindo de 1919 até 1950. Alguns fatos históricos são destacados, contextualizados e comparados com os de outras instituições do gênero, assim como são mencionados determinados personagens que tiveram participação nos acontecimentos relatados, hoje obscurecidos pelo tempo, reconstruindo o panorama de um período em que a Faculdade de Medicina do Pará era uma escola médica isolada no extremo norte, única do gênero em uma área de grande extensão e com desafios sanitários até hoje longe de serem superados.

Palavras-chave: História da Medicina; Escolas Médicas; Serviços de Saúde.

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RESUMEN

Las circunstancias habidas desde la fundación de la Facultad de Medicina de Pará, Brasil hasta su federación se presentan en una perspectiva cronológica, siguiendo desde 1919 hasta 1950. Se destacan algunos hechos históricos, contextualizados y comparados con los de otras instituciones del género, bien como se mencionan determinados personajes que tuvieron participación en los acontecimientos relatados, hoy oscurecidos por el tiempo, reconstruyendo el panorama de un período en que la Facultad de Medicina de Pará era una escuela médica aislada en el extremo norte, única en el género, en un área de gran extensión y con desafíos sanitarios hasta hoy lejos de ser superados.

Palabras clave: Historia de la Medicina; Escuelas Médicas; Servicios de Salud.



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