

## La Tunisie Médicale: Memory of Medicine in Tunisia

### La Tunisie Médicale: Mémoire de la Médecine en Tunisie

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La Tunisie Médicale, the official organ of the Société Tunisienne des Sciences Médicales (STSM) and the Ordre National des Médecins de Tunisie, was founded in 1903 (ISSN 0041-4131 and INIST code 4691 in the French Pascal database). The 1st issue appeared in March 1903, when the journal was known as the Bulletin des Sciences médicales de Tunis.

These historical notes were collected mainly from issues of Tunisie médicale, and from four books: 1) Médecine et Médecins de Tunisie published in 1952 to mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of the société des sciences médicales de Tunis (1) ; The book was written by Dr. Raoul Dana (president of the society), Dr. Maurice Uzan (former president of the society, director of the physiology laboratory at the Institut des Hautes Etudes de Tunis and editor-in-chief of Tunisie Médicale) and Dr. Raymond Didier (general secretary of the society), 2) La médecine en Tunisie (1881-1994) published in 1994 (2) by Dr. Mohamed Moncef Zitouna (pathology), 3) la société tunisienne des sciences médicales (1902 - 2002) published in 2003 (3) written by Mohamed Moncef Zitouna (pathology ) and 4) La mosaïque médicale de Tunisie (1800 - 1950) published in Paris in 2008 (4) written by Dr. Lucien Moatti (oto-rhino-laryngology).

This journal has had many names (Bulletin de l'hôpital Sadiki, Bulletin de la société des sciences médicales de Tunis, Revue tunisienne des sciences médicales, Revue de la société des sciences médicales de Tunis, La Tunisie Médicale). Between 1902 and 1952, the medical press in Tunisia was rich (figure 1).



Figure 1. Tunisia's Rich Medical Press

At the same time, there were isolated personal initiatives, with some doctors creating their own journals, such as Tunis médical [created by Dr. Louis Caillon] and another, Tunisie médicale [created by Dr. Antoine Porot]. Since 1929, colleagues have united all these journals under the umbrella of the parent journal, which is now definitively called “La Tunisie médicale”.

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The Société des Sciences Médicales de Tunis had a regular activity. The scientific debates of the various sessions were published in Tunisie Médicale, for example: we report the debates of the session of December 13th, 1911. At first, the doctors (Italian and French) tried to create a glossary to understand the Tunisian words expressing the symptoms that brought patients to the clinic. A scientific study was carried out by Dr. René Broc to understand the appropriate terminology entitled "Essai sur le langage médical populaire tunisien" (5) (figures 2,3).

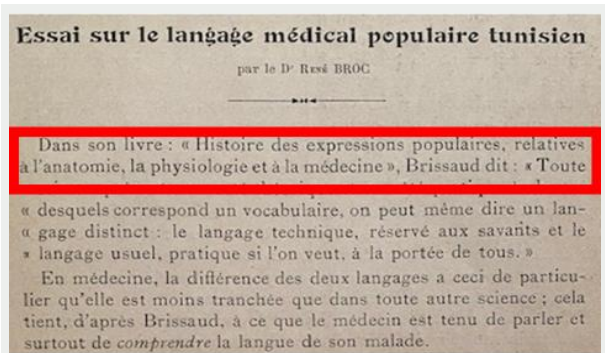


Figure 2. An essay on popular Tunisian medical language

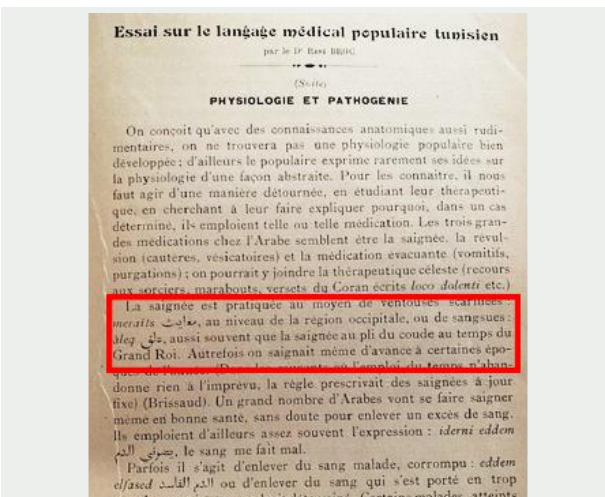


Figure 3. Essay on popular medical language applied to physiology and pathogenesis

The discussion of difficult cases formed the basis of all sessions. An article on rare fractures was published in August 1912. The findings of research into exanthematic typhus by Charles Nicolle and Ernest Conseil (published in the Annales de l'Institut Pasteur, April-May 1912) were reported in Tunisie Médicale. Prof. R. Leriche (Lyon Faculty of Medicine) published "les résultats du traitement chirurgical du cancer de l'estomac" in the January 1912 issue.

La Tunisie Médicale published the activities and abstracts of the proceedings of the XXII<sup>nd</sup> Congress of Alienists and Neurologists from France and French-speaking countries (6). This congress took place in Tunis between April 1 and 7, 1912. The Bab Souika square with the domes of the holy Sidi Mehrez (called Sultane el Médina, so revered by the inhabitants) was on the front page to highlight the city of Tunis (figures 4,5).

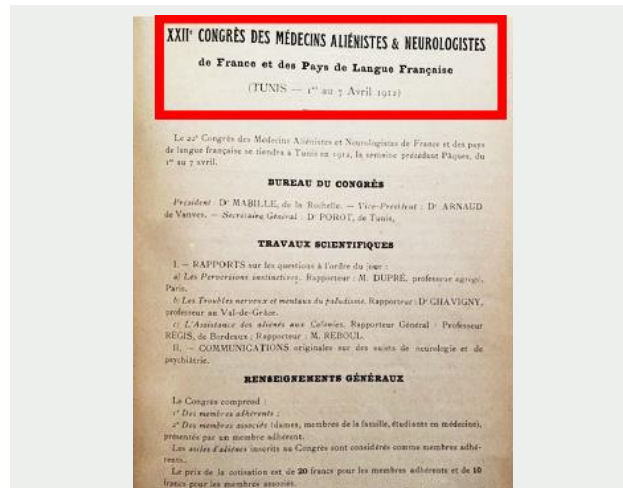


Figure 4. Program for the XXII congress of alienist physicians & neurologists (April 1 to 7, 1912)

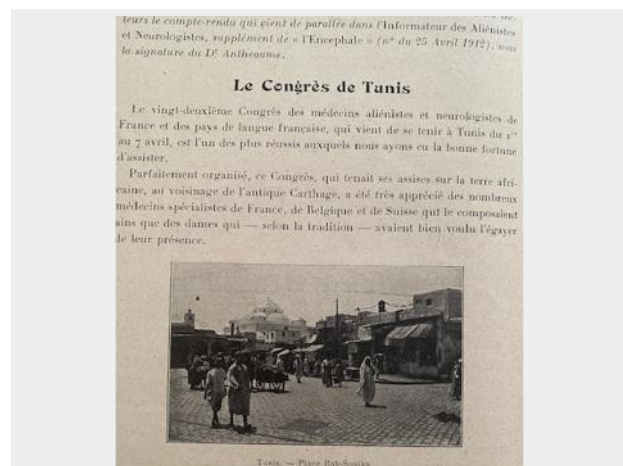


Figure 5. Attraction poster for the city of Tunis, venue for the XXII congress of alienist & neurologist physicians (April 1-7, 1912).

A summary of the findings was reported in Tunisie Médicale in January 1912. The main conclusions were that "Aissaouas are individuals who, through special education, physical processes (monotonous sensory excitation) and psychic processes (autosuggestion) achieve a particular state of hypnosis". The participants also concluded that there were probably hysterics and simulators. At the end of the congress, participants were granted a post-congress tour of southern Tunisia as shown in the photo (figure 6). All these data were reported in Tunisie Médicale in January 1912.



Figure 6. The post congress of the XXII congress of alienist physicians & neurologists (April 1 to 7, 1912)

In May 1928, the journal paid tribute to the Tunisian Nobel Prize winner of 1928: Doctor Charles Nicolle (1866-1936) (figure 7).

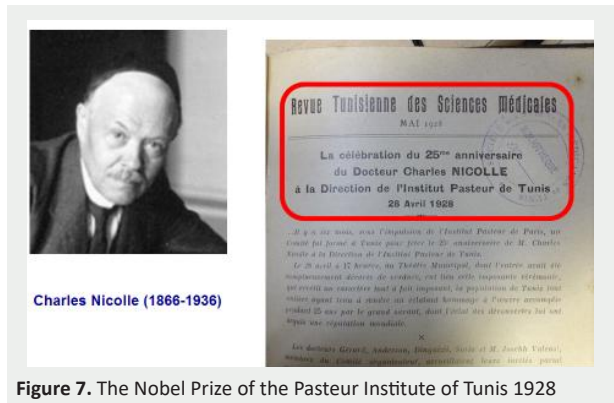


Figure 7. The Nobel Prize of the Pasteur Institute of Tunis 1928

Surgical publications also had their place. For example: Dr. Cheyrou-Lagrèze (medical captain) published an article entitled "l'hémostase d'extrême urgence sur le champ de bataille" in the August 1938 issue. Doctors Commandant Debrie and Captain Ratte from the "Louis Vaillard" military hospital in Tunis reported a clinical case entitled "Sigmoidite et méso sigmoidite à forme tumorale : colectomie en 3 temps avec guérison" in the same issue. Dr. Gabriel René Eugène Brun (7) (chief surgeon at Sadiki Hospital and associate member of the Paris Academy of Surgery) wrote an article entitled "L'appendicite aiguë est une maladie chirurgicale" ("Acute appendicitis is a surgical disease"). He had further insisted in this article that "there is no medical treatment for appendicitis" based on Professor Dieulafof's conclusions which were already half a century old as he claimed. A review of the literature from 2017 to 2023 showed that the medical treatment of acute appendicitis is still relevant, as evidenced by the articles concerning the 14 therapeutic trials grouped together under the acronym "CODA trials Appendicitis", which call into question the conclusions announced by Brun (8-10). After the Second World War, La Tunisie Médicale identified an editorial board, each member had a specific role, as illustrated by an issue from 1952. La Tunisie Médicale announced on the front page of its issues that it was the organ of the Société des Sciences Médicales de Tunis, the Conseil de l'Ordre des Médecins de Tunisie (Medical Council of Tunisia) and the bulletin of the Sadiki Hospital (figure 8).

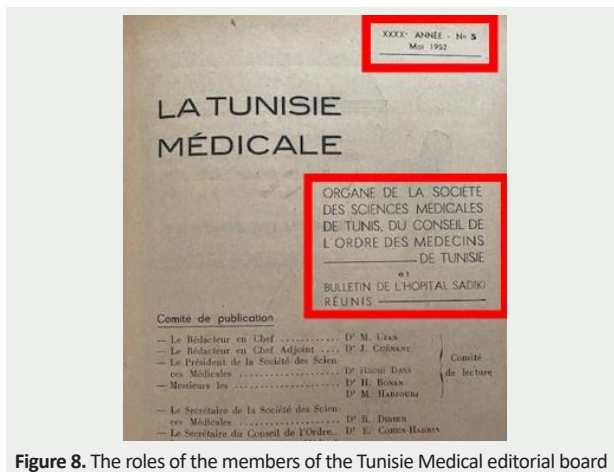


Figure 8. The roles of the members of the Tunisie Medical editorial board

To mark the arrival of Professor Gutman (a renowned gastroenterologist), a joint meeting of the Tunisian Society of Medical Sciences and the Society of Gastroenterology was held on January 9, 1952, the abstracts of which were published in Tunisie Médicale. Among those present were Dr. Sassi, Dr. Delort, Dr. Fourati, Dr. Daoud and Dr. Jacqueline Gutman, daughter of Professor Gutman. The periodical "La semaine des hôpitaux de Paris" (11) devoted its issue 63-64 of August 26-30, 1952 to medicine in Tunisia. This issue published work carried out in Tunisia, some of which was published in full or in part in Tunisie médicale (figure 9).

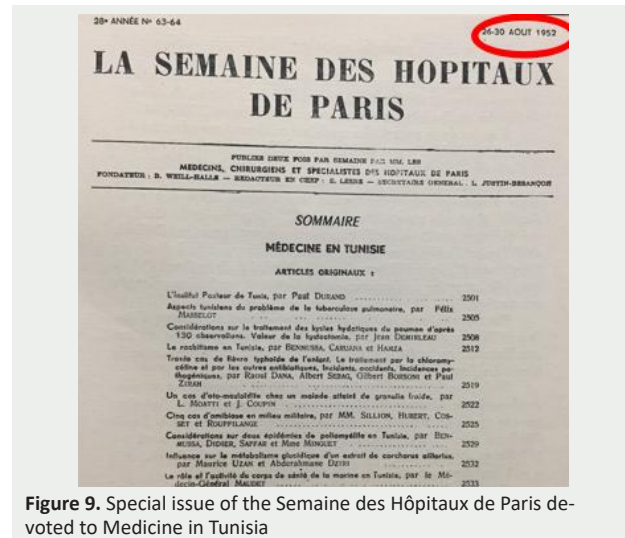


Figure 9. Special issue of the Semaine des Hôpitaux de Paris devoted to Medicine in Tunisia

Examples include Jean Demirleau's work on hydatid cysts of the lung (carried out at the French Civil Hospital, now the Charles Nicolle Hospital in Tunis), rickets in Tunisia by Ben Mussa and Béchir Hamza, the influence on carbohydrate metabolism of an extract of Corchorus Olitorius (the plant with which Tunisians make "Meloukhia") by Maurice Uzan and Abderrahmane Dziri (in practice, this plant lowers glycemia - experimental work carried out at the "Institut des Hautes Etudes de Tunis" in Roma street - Physiology Laboratory).

After independence, on Saturday, February 23, 1957, the Société des Sciences Médicales de Tunis held its first meeting under the chairmanship of the then-President of the Council, Mr. Habib Bourguiba. The Société des Sciences Médicales de Tunis became the « Société Tunisienne des Sciences Médicales » (STSM), with Dr. Hédi Raies (ophthalmology) as its first president. The session was extremely brilliant and well attended (3). La Tunisie Médicale continued to appear despite the mass departure of cooperating doctors.

Regularity varied: monthly from 1903 to 1914, resuming monthly after WW1 from 1920 to 1939, then interrupted during WW2; regular publication again in 1947. In 1956, the journal was "Tunisified"; in 1960, the publication was bimonthly due to the mass departure of foreign doctors, and Tunisian doctors were few in number. In 1985, thanks to the efforts of Professor Ali Horchani (president of the society at the time), the publication was once again monthly.

**La Tunisie Médicale has promoted and continues to promote research and researchers.**

In 2006, the editorial policy was redefined once again based on what Jean Paul Sartre wrote in 1946 in his document "écrire pour son époque": "The dead act for a while as if they were alive. A little while, a year, ten years, fifty years perhaps, a finite period, in any case; and then we bury them for the second time. "This is the measure that we propose to the publishing researcher: as long as his articles provoke interest, even if he's no more than a shadow (retired?), he'll live! "On the other hand, a researcher publishes to be read, named, known and, above all to be referenced. The journal's new editorial policy, introduced in 2006 recommendations (12): regular publication of Tunisie Médicale, encouraging articles to be written in English language, respecting Vancouver standards. To improve the impact factor of the journal, we need to reduce the number of clinical case reports and encourage authors to submit systematic reviews of the literature, with or without meta-analysis, in accordance with the principles of Evidence-Based Medicine.

To date, La Tunisie Médicale has published a total of 7931, 3713 articles from 2006 to 2024 including 1.767 in English, i.e. 47.5%. Between 2006 and 2024, 47 systematic reviews with or without meta-analyses were published (1.3%).

**The key dates for La Tunisie Médicale in the digital age are as follows:**

1. Indexing in Medline, which began in May-June 1965 (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/nlmcatalog/?term=tunisie+medicale>), has been of interest to issues of Tunisie Médicale from 1949 to the present day thanks to the medical mosaic of Tunisia at that time (4).
2. Indexing in Scopus (Elsevier), which began on March 15th, 2004, also covered issues of Tunisie Médicale from 1949 to the present day.
3. La Tunisie Médicale's own website was launched in January 2009 with the editorial board headed by CD (13) (figure 10) and with the support of the then Minister of Health Mondher Zenaidi: [www.latunisiemedicale.com](http://www.latunisiemedicale.com)



Figure 10. Tunisia Médicale website launched in 2009

4. In February 2009, La Tunisie Médicale was made freely available online in full text on PubMed Link Out (13) (figure 11).

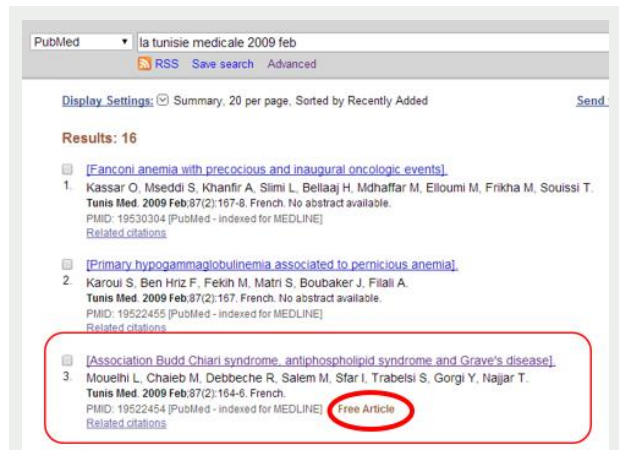


Figure 11. "Link Out" created in February 2009 for "La Tunisie Médicale"

5. Online submission of articles became a reality in 2012 (14) (CD and team) (figure 12).



Figure 12. Submission and Reviewing Process with final decision for all articles since 2012.

6. In 2015, La Tunisie Médicale discontinued its paper editions and became an electronic journal (ISSN : 2724-7031).
7. In January 2021, La Tunisie Médicale has been archived on PubMed Central (PMC) thanks to the efforts of LZ and his team (figure 13).



Figure 13. La Tunisie Médicale is archived on PMC archives

8. La Tunisie Médicale's application is accepted by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE), and the editor-in-chief of La Tunisie Médicale (LZ) becomes a member of the ICMJE board in 2021 (figure 14).



Figure 14. La Tunisie médicale is part of the large family of medical journals

9. In May 2023, The newly revamped Tunisie Médicale website goes online (figure 15).

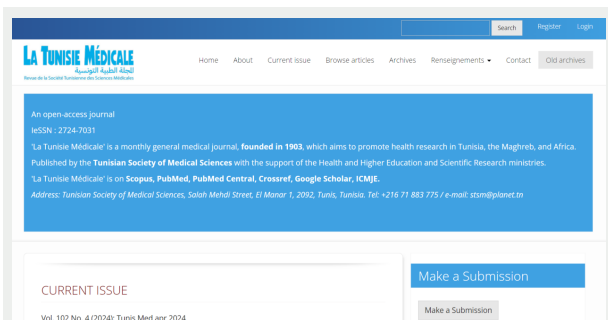


Figure 15. New look of the Tunisie Médicale website

10. In January 2024, every article will have its own DOI (Digital Objective Identifier, CrossRef).

11. In April 2024: thanks to a partnership with the Tunisian National Archives, and after a monumental 18-month project, La Tunisie Médicale has succeeded in digitalizing all its editions from 1912 to 2008, although the oldest archives (1903-1911) were lost during floods in the 1980s. (<https://latunisiemedicale.com/index.php/tunismed/oldarchives>).

12. Since April 1, 2024, Tunisie Médicale has changed its policy of payment upon acceptance of the manuscript.

### La Tunisie Médicale's reputation grows stronger with time.

La Tunisie Médicale has been indexed in Medline (PubMed) and Scopus since 1949, in PubMed Central since 2021, CrossRef since January 2024. We can also find it in Pascal, Embase and Google Scholar. The number of hits on La Tunisie Médicale (Hits: Numbers of times users clicked La Tunisie Médicale's Links) collected by MEDLINE is on average 3000/month. In August 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, it reached 10446 hits.

### Nowadays, in April 2024 the situation can be summed up in FOUR points

- Published articles concern all disciplines: Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy and STEM applied to Medicine, Pedagogy, and Cost studies.
- All types of articles accepted: Original Articles, Literature Reviews with or without meta-analysis, Clinical Cases, Editorials, Letters to the Editor, and Conference Abstracts

in English, French, and rarely in Arabic.

- Eleven issues/year with 11-13 articles and a maximum of two clinical case reports per issue.
- Authors come from Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania, Syria, Iraq, sub-Saharan Africa (Mali, Niger, Chad, Benin, Togo, Ivory Coast, Senegal...), France...

### In finé,

La Tunisie Médicale is over 120 years old. La Tunisie Médicale is doing well, and we must continue to support it. In 2024, it is ranked 4th in Africa in terms of article production and H-index, and 2nd in Africa in terms of citations/documents. It is ranked Q4, with a CiteScore of 1.

### Acknowledgement:

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