The use of mineral substances in the treatment of skin diseases in Byzantium (4th - 7th century AD)

Athanasiou Christos, PhD Candidate

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki - Faculty of Health Sciences - School of Pharmacy

Summary

From the beginnings of medicine, skin diseases loomed large in the earliest literature of Egypt, and continued to be described right through Greek, Roman, Byzantine and Arabian medicine. Since the earliest and most vigorous of man's medical efforts were made to relieve his itching and to face successfully the sores, diseases and parasites which afflicted his skin, this seems natural. From the early antiquity to comparatively recent times dermatology was a part of general medicine and it is only within the end of 18th century that its study and literature have been the work of specialists.

References to skin diseases in medical texts of the period under examination (4th - 7th century AD), for the treatment of which pharmaceutical formulations with mineral substances are proposed, account for the majority, including not only eminently skin diseases, but also diseases which are symptoms of other diseases and are manifested in the skin. Apart from these two categories, reports are made for the diseases of nails, and also for skin lesions due to burns and bites. Therefore, the proposed pharmaceutical formulations with mineral substances presented in the literature for the treatment of specific diseases are characterized by the widest range compared to other disease categories, even including interesting combinations.