

# The pioneers of dermatology - Part 3

## The life and works of Moriz Kaposi

### *Os pioneiros da dermatologia - Parte 3*

### *A propósito da vida e obra de Moriz Kaposi*

Ney Romiti<sup>1</sup>

On the occasion of the commemoration of 100 years after the ascension of Moriz Kaposi to the professorship chair in the I University Dermatology Clinic in Vienna, Prim. Dr. J. Frankl, substituting for professor F. Hebra presented a lecture on his life and works. Presented here is the result of concrete data researched and obtained from the Jewish birth certificate of Kaposi in Kaposvar, in the public registry that includes the period of 1771 up to 1873. Kaposvar (the city of his residence) is located in the western part of Hungary, in the middle portion of the Trans-Danube. The city was founded in 1712, when the subjects separated from feudal Lord Paul Esterhazy. The bibliographical material of Kaposi begins with the annotations supplied by the high rabbi Emmanuel Herzog, of the Kaposvar district. The birth certificate of Kaposi recorded: Moriz Kohn, born October 23, and following which, in Hebraic letters: 24 Tisri. On the line above, there were four capital letters also in Hebrew signifying the year 598, which is equivalent in the current calendar to 1837; therefore the date of birth of Moriz Kohn was October 23, 1837. The last line of the registration includes the paternity: Salomon Kohn (father) and Rosa Krauss (mother) - and the city where the progenitors resided, Kaposvar. The top of the death certificate, written by the high



rabbi Emmanuel Herzog in Hebraic lettering, reported that he died as Moriz Kaposi in Vienna (March 6, 1902). In the registry of the centennial commemoration of the Tancs gymnasium (1812 to 1912) his name appears in sixth place among the eleven students to finish the course, followed by the information: "Mór Kohn (Dr. Mór Kaposi), university professor, famous dermatologist in Vienna."

The medicine course was accomplished at the Vienna University of Medicine, with graduation in 1861. He was admitted into the Hebra clinic in 1866, whereupon his educational activity was so exponential and meritorious, that in 1875 he became a adjunct professor. In 1869 he converted to Catholicism and married Martha, a daughter of Hebra.

In the Hebra manual of dermatology, whose second volume was written by Kaposi in 1876, may be seen, just below the title on page 193: "Dr. Kaposi (Moriz Kohn) of the Vienna University". In the footnote of that page appears the following annotation: "Our honored collaborator, Herr Moriz Kohn, changed his internationally famous name to Kaposi (Ed.)".

It comes with surprise now to understand the fact that this difficult and delicate decision should have come to public attention through a medical

Received on October 04, 2004.

Approved by the Consultive Council and accepted for publication on October 04, 2004.

<sup>1</sup> Emeritus Professor. Titular Professor of the Discipline of Dermatological Clinics and Pathology, UNILUS - Santos (SP).

compendium, which event analyzed from any angle, arouses speculation, but Kaposi employed this means to honor his mother-land, Hungary, and especially to dedicate his scientific life to his native city, Kaposvar, and furthermore to differentiate himself from the great number of doctors with the surname "Kohn" who practiced the profession in the city of Vienna.

With his relatives and with his maternal city he always maintained an intimate and continuing contact, and therefore, the alteration of his name was

a "Hungarization" of his Magyar identity.

The internationalization of knowledge that the broad medical class came to have of morbus Kaposi (Kaposi's sarcoma), until then known only to dermatologists, resulted in virtue of the onset of the Aids epidemic. In the first publication (1872) of the sarcoma that today takes his name (multiple hemorrhagic and idiopathic sarcoma), Kaposi had described it and considering it to be a systemic disease. □

---

*MAILING ADDRESS:*

*Ney Romiti*

*Rua Machado de Assis, 303*

*11050 - 060 Santos SP*