

# The history of dermatology, venereology and dermatopathology in different countries - North Cyprus

Aslı Feride Kaptanoğlu\* and Didem Mullaaziz

Department of Dermatology and Venereology, Near East University Faculty of Medicine, Nicosia , North Cyprus

## Introduction

Cyprus is an island, located in the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea, at the south of Turkey. There are mainly two communities living on the island, namely, Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots. It was ruled by the Lusignan dynasty (1192 AD-1489 AD), Venetian domination (1489-1570), Ottoman Empire (1571-1878) and Britain (1878-1960). In 1960 Republic of Cyprus was founded by the Turkish and Greek Cypriot communities.

There was no dermatologist at the moment in the island. Dr Zihni Uzman, (born 1937, in Pedulla, Cyprus), after graduating from İstanbul University Faculty of Medicine, worked as a general practitioner in many villages of Cyprus between 1961-69. Noticing the need of a dermatologist in the island, he started his dermatology residency in the Dermatology & Venereology Department, in İstanbul University. He worked with Prof. Dr Cevat Kerim İncedayı, Prof. Dr. Osman Yemni, Prof. Dr. Nevzat Öke, Prof Dr Osman Lav, Prof Dr. Agop Kotogyan and Prof Dr Turkan Saylan, who have been the milestones in Turkish Dermatology. Then he returned the island and started to work as dermatologist in 1972 [1]. But these times were hard times for the island because of the conflicts between two societies. The United Nations peacekeeping force arrived to the island in 1964 and after the war in 1974, two communities were separated. Politically North Cyprus has a unique status since 40 years. Since then, the northern part of the island has been ruled by its own government, which is only recognized by Turkey [2]. This international isolation of newly formed government led to a lack of medical and health facilities among the Turkish Cypriot community.

Dr. Zihni Uzman (Figure 1) worked as the only dermatologist in the government hospital in Turkish part (namely Dr. Burhan Nalbantoglu Hospital, Nicosia) until 1975. Turkish Red Cross kept sending dermatologists in case of a need until new dermatologists completed their residencies and came back to the island. After 1975, Dr. Rifat Bicen, Dr. Hasan Öztoprak, Dr. Jülide Çolakoğlu Ayberk and Dr. Özruhan Aygün joined and pioneered the dermatology community [1].

## Development of Dermatology

In the beginning, dermatology and venereology service was supplied only as an outpatient clinic. There was no inpatient clinic until 1980. From the memoirs of Dr. Uzman, it is learned that the first pemphigus patient caused a panic among the doctors of the hospital. In order to avoid the risk of secondary infections, the patient was put in quarantine in a small hospital which is 80 km away from the center [1]. The inpatient clinic was opened after 1983, with the leadership of Dr Özruhan Aygün. At this time, a room with 2 beds in the internal

medicine ward was used for the dermatology patients. After 1995, a dermatology clinic with inpatient beds and equipments was put on service. The effort of Dr. Özruhan Aygün, who had served 34 years as the head of department until she retired in 2014, in the establishment and development of dermatology clinic is very valued. Cryotherapy applications were initiated by Dr. Kani Nalbant in 1990, and since then became a routine of the department. In 2009, a phototherapy unit was set up. The pioner in allergic dermatological diseases in the island is Dr. Özalp Nasıfoğlu, who preferred to run his own clinic. He had set up an allergy unit, and performed the skin tests and immunotherapy



**Figure 1.** The first dermatologist Dr Zihni Uzman , 78 years old, still practicing dermatology in his office in Nicosia.

**Correspondence to:** Ass. Prof. Dr. Aslı F. Kaptanoğlu, Department of Dermatology, Near East University Hospital, Nicosia, North Cyprus, Tel: 90-392-6751000, Ext: 1286, **E-mail:** dr.aslikaptanoglu@gmail.com

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**Nooshin Bagherani, M. D.**

Dermatologist at Dr. Nooshin Bagherani's office, Taha Physicians' building, P.O.Box: 6414715878, Khoramshahr, Khuzestan Province, Iran; Email: nooshinbagherani@yahoo.com

**Bruce R. Smoller, M. D.**

Chair, Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine  
 Professor, Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine  
 Professor, Department of Dermatology  
 University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry, USA  
 E-mail: smollerbrucer@uams.edu

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applications. In 2013, a digital dermoscopy unit was established in Akçiçek Hospital, Kyrenia with the special efforts and grants of the North Cyprus Cancer Charity Trust.

Prior to 1985 dermatologists were mainly working in the central hospital. There were 4 health centers throughout the country and dermatologists who were alternately going these urban centers in the certain days of the week to offer outpatient dermatology services. During that time dermatologists in the island increased in number. Currently there are 19 dermatologists in the North Cyprus. Private sector mostly engages the cosmetic dermatology. Dr Nevruz Tuğcu, Dr Hanife Ezgi Erçal and Dr Ahmet Gürpınar have lasers in the private offices.

### Venereal Diseases

The dermatologists play an important role in the venereal diseases. The case of North Cyprus is particularly interesting as it is one of the most popular destinations for casino tourism and entertainment, alongside to its sunny beaches [3]. Before 1974, prostitution throughout Cyprus was performed primarily in licensed brothels. But after the de facto division of the island into two parts, the brothels in North Cyprus were closed, prostitution here became illegal and shifted to street level. During the 1990s, the number of foreign sex workers increased sharply and North Cyprus has become a target country for sex workers from Eastern Europe. In 2000 North Cyprus the Law of Nightclubs and Similar Establishments put regulations for the employment of foreign sex workers, confining the practice to licensed nightclubs and pubs, whose proprietors must seek work permits for their employees and observe the law's regulations. Work permit for a sex worker require different health controls. The applicant is taken directly from the airport to the hospital ward where she is tested for a range of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS, syphilis and gonorrhea. A positive test results in immediate deportation. If the tests are negative the woman is granted the work permit, but she is obliged thereafter to attend weekly check-ups for the infectious diseases [4]. The venereology department in Dr Burhan Nalbantoğlu Government Hospital successfully and dedicatedly continues to perform these controls since 1990's, in association with the gynecologists.

### Dermatologists as Community Leaders

Dermatologists have assumed leadership roles and tasks in a variety of areas within the community in North Cyprus. Dr Ata Öncel Onar, being a strong figure among healthcare workers, has served as the representative of the health union (Tıp-İŞ) in the founder parliament in 1984. Also, Dr Ruhsan Tuğyan is an important figure in the political arena. During her 2 term of representary in the parliament, she put great effort and leadership on the formation of "family law". Dr. Yücel Atakara is also known for his dedicated efforts for Alsancak region. He served as the president of the municipality of Alsancak for many years(1). One of the interesting dermatologists is Dr Hasan Öztoprak, who also have specialisation in otolaryngology and serves for the patients of both specialties in his private office in Guzelyurt (Morphou) area.

### Education

Until 2008 there were no academic medical institute in North Cyprus. The first medical faculty was initiated in Near East University (NEU) in 2008 and the university hospital in 2010. NEU- Faculty of Medicine, with regard to its quality of education, educational staff, infrastructure, laboratories equipped with latest technology and

modern educational hospital facilities, was accepted to World Health Organization (WHO) Avicenna Group [5]. The medical faculty accepts international students all around the world. The dermatology and venereology department was established with the efforts of Associate Professor Dr Aslı Kaptanoğlu in 2010. Dr Didem Mullaaziz joined the team in 2013 (Figures 2 and 3). The department fully performs all dermatological activities and equipped with allergy tests, phototherapy unit, cryotherapy, digital dermoscopy, mole mapping, dermatocosmetic surgery unit and lasers. Also, full support is supplied by



Figure 2. Dr. Didem Mullaaziz, teaching skin patch test to the medical students.

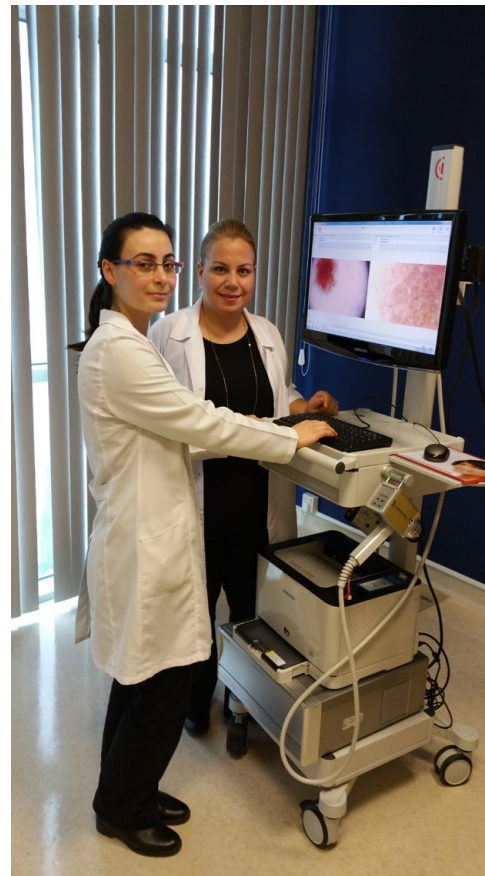


Figure 3. Asc Prof Dr Aslı F Kaptanoğlu and Dr Didem Mullaaziz working with digital dermoscopy.

the other departments of the university such as in infectious diseases (bacteriology and micology lab), genetic (e.g: PCR) and pathology (immunohistochemistry and immunoflorescein dyes). In addition to daily clinical practice and teaching dermatology to the medical students, the dermatologists make research in experimental, clinical and public health areas, as well as conducting continuing medical education activities such as sessions of case discussions, and seminars [6-10]. Due to the lack of academic staff in number, the department does not accept residents yet.

## Dermatology Association

Cyprus Turkish Association of Dermatology Venereology and Cosmetology (CTA-DVC) was established in 2013 with the presidency of Dr Sibel Tozaki, who is the head of the dermatology department of the government hospital. The association have also members of Turkish Cyriots who are working all around the world. CTA-DVC still maintains institutionalization efforts until now, and has not organized a meeting yet.

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