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## The care of child through times

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### Abstract

The social history of the child is permeated by various events that have occurred through the ages. This article presents some aspects related to the social roles of the child at different times up to the present day, and the importance attributed to it through the emergence of educational institutions and health establishments created specifically for the care of children.

**Keywords:** Children, infant, infant care

### Introduction

Throughout the history the human being has been going through different stages from the social, political and economic aspects, having his life more or less valued in function of the predominant characteristics of each epoch. Permeated by beliefs, taboos and myths, children's concerns go back to the beginnings of humanity, whether in the concrete sense of health, life, or even superstitions, such as those that determined the use of colored clothing (blue for boys and pink for girls) as a way to prevent the little ones from becoming mythological beings <sup>[1]</sup>.

Attitudes towards the child varied according to the organization of different societies, cultures and periods. In Antiquity and until the Middle Ages the differences between age classes were practically unrecognized and as soon as the children acquired physical detachment, they were mixed with the adults in their works and games, going from small child to young man capable of facing all difficulties that the life of then presented him. And, in times of such high mortality, the child's first social role was to survive <sup>[2]</sup>.

Even from this point of view is possible to find periods in which children had some degree of social recognition. The earliest historical records of Child Care were found among the Babylonians, in the Hammurabi Code (2500-2000 BC), which introduced laws designed to protect orphan and abandoned. Among the Egyptians infanticide and child abandonment were severely punished and the Ebers Papyrus (1550 BC) records guidelines that defended the family and preached humanitarian treatment of the child. In these two historical documents can be found elements that determined that children should be treated with care, be bathed and have their hair cut and wear clean and well-kept clothes. In addition, breastfeeding was also prominent as it was considered important for health and should be maintained for two to three years. For mothers who could not breastfeed the so-called "mercenary mothers", slaves who offered their milk to the children of the ladies at the expense of their own children, should be provided <sup>[3]</sup>. The Hebrews (2000 BC) were against contraception and infanticide and the state assumed the creation of abandoned children. Also, among these people, breastfeeding was considered important and should be maintained for up to two years <sup>[1]</sup>.

However, among some peoples, like the Philistines, Carthaginians and Phoenicians, the ritual of sacrificing children at popular festivals were common. In the Greco-Roman world, the father decided on the life of the newborn child, and the children who have congenital defects, weak, or representing burdens for the family were sacrificed. Only after the clashes between Romans and Carthaginians, in the so-called Punic Wars (264 BC-146 BC), the excesses practiced against sick or malformed children began to diminish <sup>[3-5]</sup>.

Although were violent and warriors societies, also between Greeks and Romans there were defenders of the child, such as Hippocrates and his disciples (450 BC) who encouraged breastfeeding and physical exercise as important elements of quality of life. Medical schools in Kos and Cnide, in Greece, were the first to have documents describing childhood diseases such as obstetric trauma, malformations, orchitis, onfalitis, diarrhea, verminosis, stomatitis and tonsillitis. Soranus of Ephesus and Claudius Galenus, greek doctors who lived in Rome

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in the second century, encouraged the care of newborns and breastfeeding. Juvenal, a Roman satirist at the end of the first century, among so many works, preached "the maximum debetur puero reverentia", or that "the child deserves the utmost consideration." Marcus Aurelius Celsus, from Alexandria, argued that boys could not be treated in the same way as men, advocating a different way of assisting children and adolescents<sup>[6, 7]</sup>.

Among the Hindus the sacred books of Manu and Susruta recorded that breastfeeding and child hygiene were important, as well as stimulating the creation of asylums for orphans. However many newborns were still being slaughtered, as was the case in China, especially among girls. In the early years of the Christian Era Aulus Cornelius Celsus wrote that "children needed to be treated totally different from adults." From then on the child protection norms are stimulated, and voluntary abortion, infanticide, exposed homes and the sale of children as slaves are morally and formally condemned. In 315 the Roman Emperor Flavius Valerius Constantinus, in his famous Edict, recommends that special care be given to orphaned and abandoned children<sup>[3, 8]</sup>.

Several famous physicians in the Byzantine period such as Oribasius (4th century AD), Alexander of Tralles, Aetius of Amida and Paulus of Aegina, all of the sixth century AD, stood out by sequencing and expanding knowledge based on the works of Sorano (FIGUEROA, 1995). In Europe, in the year 787, in the city of Milan, Archbishop Dateo founded the first asylum (brefotrofio) to collect abandoned children. Emperor Charles the Great, around the year 800, created special asylums for children and ordered them to be placed under the care of religious orders<sup>[6, 9]</sup>.

Even the Middle Ages having contributed relatively little to pediatrics, some people deserve to be highlighted such as Rhazés, who produced a monograph on childhood diseases called "De variolis et morbillis", and some contributions by Avicenna and Averroes, as well as an anonymous document entitled "Practica Puerorum" which have served as a reference. Still in this period, Vidus Vidius (1526), Giovanni Filippo Ingrassia (1552), Gullermo Baillon (1578) and Johannes Colerus (1594) described some childhood diseases such as varicella, scarlet fever, whooping cough and measles, respectively. Also noteworthy is Thomas Phayre who published "The Book of Children" and is considered the father of English pediatrics; Felix Würtz, in Switzerland, who published "Practica der Wundartzney" in 1563, as well as Joubert professors at the Faculty of Medicine of Montpellier and Hieronimus Mercuriales at Italian universities, who excelled in teaching pediatrics and research on childhood problems<sup>[3, 10]</sup>.

In 1198 Pope Innocent III founded the Asylum of the Holy Spirit, in Rome, with the purpose of collecting, treating and educating abandoned children. In this asylum was installed the first wheel of the laid out of which we are aware. Even in the Middle Ages many measures aimed at protecting children were established and spread throughout Europe<sup>[1, 11]</sup>.

From the fifteenth century, allied to actions and practices for the benefit children, began to increase an almost specialized literature in childcare especially in Germany, Italy, England and Belgium. In France Ambroise Paré (sixteenth century) strongly stimulated the practice of breastfeeding; Simon de Vallembert published, in 1565, a book entitled "The way of nurturing and educating children from birth"; Scevole de

Sainte-Marthe, in 1584, wrote "The Paedotrophie", which was published in 1698, in which he makes important considerations about prenatal care and breastfeeding, precursors, so to speak, of self-demand feeding. In 1730 a book intitled "Rosengarten", by Eucarius Roesslin, created in 1513, was reintroduced and presented in a simplified way the foundations of childcare<sup>[6, 12]</sup>.

The modern conception of childhood appeared in the eighteenth century before the paradox faced by the society of the time. If, on the one hand, the child becomes an object of attention and begins to be recognized in its particularity, on the other hand, this attention denies one's own childhood, considering it as the future adult or the "man of tomorrow". In his celebrated title "Emile" Jean Jacques Rousseau, in the eighteenth century, affirmed that the child was born pure and society deformed it, and stressed the importance of breastfeeding, personal hygiene, sunbathing and appropriate clothing as elements for children. Influenced by the thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Fransiz Dessartz in France and Christoph Wilhelm Hufeland in Germany also advocated the practice of healthy habits of hygiene, physical and moral education, and adequate food for children. Johann Formey, a teacher of Berlin, stated in 1795 that high infant mortality was caused by the fact that babies were overly bandaged, fed hard to digest, and lacked cleanliness and exercise. Saint Vincent de Paul, in 1617 in France, founded asylums for destitute children and created the Order of the Vincentians, which spread throughout the world and continues to this day to welcome and care for people who are unattended<sup>[1, 9]</sup>.

In the book "Paidoiatreia pratica", edited by Theodor Zwinger in 1722, besides the description of several common diseases of childhood, for the first time in history the "pediatrics" expression was used to describe the set of knowledge and actions directed to the care of children<sup>[3]</sup>. Until then the books made references to "pestilences of children", "sydden illnesses of children" and "diseases of children", or equivalent in other languages, to indicate the performance in child health care. In 1855 the word "paediatrica" was listed in Medical Lexicon-A Dictionary of Medical Science, edited by Professor Robley Dunglison<sup>[13]</sup>. The first children's clinic to be recorded is that of Dr. George Armstrong, who was based in London in 1769. In 1781 another clinic, now in Vienna, emerges and several similar services were rapidly being installed throughout Europe<sup>[14]</sup>. In 1780 Jean-Andre Venel inaugurated in Switzerland the first orthopedic infant establishment in the world<sup>[1, 15]</sup>.

France remains at the forefront of advocacy and childcare. During the French Revolution all homeless children were considered as children of the motherland and were under state custody, which gave birth to a series of laws for children, which quickly spread to other European countries. In 1802 was created in Paris the first children's hospital, Hôpital des Enfants Malades. Charles Michael Billard published, in 1828, an important paper that will serve as reference and incentive for many, the "Traité des maladies des enfants nouveaunés el à la maele". In 1844, Jean-Baptiste Marbeau created the first kindergarten, and in 1892 were installed the first pediatric practice and a sterilized infant outpatient clinic (Goutte de Lait), all in Paris<sup>[15]</sup>.

In Germany, in 1834, appeared the first specialized pediatric journal, as the first university chair of pediatrics (1845) and the first pediatric association (1883). It was the German gynecologist Johann Friedrich Ahlfeld in 1878 who

introduced one of the key actions for the evaluation of the child, regular weighings to monitor his progress. The chemist Franz Von Soxhlet, in 1886, developed the process of sterilizing milk and bottles in an attempt to reduce mortality from intestinal infectious diseases <sup>[6, 16]</sup>.

The contribution of the English was also marked by the inauguration, in 1852, of the first children's hospital in London, the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children. In 1870 the first child care society was founded in England-The Infant Life Protection Society-dedicated to supporting orphans and abandoned. Brunell Davis, in 1917 in London, created teams of health visitors to help and guide mothers in the hygiene education of their children <sup>[3]</sup>.

Since then several initiatives have taken place to support and care for children. In 1924, the Geneva Declaration was published as the first document that gathered important principles for the protection of the child, endorsed by the League of Nations. With the inception of the United Nations, the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) was created in 1946 to promote children's rights, respond to their basic needs and contribute to their development. The United Nations General Assembly, on November 20, 1959, takes another important step forward in the fight to protect the child by approving, by acclamation, the Universal Declaration of the Rights of the Child, signed thirty years later, in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Two other international movements organized for the benefit of children, such as the New York Convention on the Rights of the Child of 01/26/1990 and the Declaration on the Rights of the Child on Survival, Protection and Development, the result of the first world meeting on behalf of the child, promoted by the United Nations in September 1990<sup>[17]</sup>.

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