

# A doctor (urologist) who became pope: Petrus Hispanus (13<sup>th</sup> century)



Prof. Dr. Manuel Mendes Silva  
Lisbon (PT)

In addition to serving as doctors and scientists, various urologists also excelled in the fields of fine arts, music, literature, history and philosophy. Others were politicians and at least one became President of a Republic.



PEDRO HISPANO (PEDRO JULIÃO) - 1212? 1216? - 1277

There were also religious urologists but as far as we know, only one became Pope: Petrus Hispanus, Pedro Hispano, Pope João XXI, in the 13th century. At that time, urology was not an independent discipline. However, Pedro Hispano - in addition to being a priest - was also a doctor (physician). He described and treated various ailments and published his findings, which would now be considered to belong to the field of urology. We can therefore consider him to be a Urologist who became Pope.

Pedro Hispano was born in Lisbon and died in Viterbo. As protégé of the Bishop of Lisbon he began his studies in Lisbon and subsequently studied philosophy, theology and medicine in Paris. He later also attended the Montpellier school where he was known as Petrus Lusitanus. A renowned black friar, he pursued his ecclesiastical career in Portugal (Mafra, Oporto, Lisbon, Braga and Guimarães).

He left the country in 1257, from where he travelled to France and Italy, practising medicine and teaching this discipline at the universities of Siena (1259) and Paris. In 1261 he moved to Viterbo, where he was consulted by eminent figures of the period, including the future Pope Adriano V. In 1272, in the Lugdunense Council, he was nominated Cardinal - Bishop of Tusculum, by Pope Gregory X. This nomination was confirmed in the Second Council of Lyon in 1274. In addition to being a priest, philosopher and theologian, he simultaneously practised medicine, and served as Pope Gregory's first Doctor.

On September 20, 1276 he was elected Pope under the name of João XXI, succeeding Adriano V. He wielded significant political influence in Europe during this period, given that the papacy was still a major force. However, eight months after his investiture, he died as a result of the collapse of his study, in the Viterbo palace, in May 1277.

Besides to being an illustrious doctor, his contemporaries considered him to be a great philosopher, theologian and orator. Dante Alighieri depicted him in the Paradise volume of the Divine comedy (XII, 134 ff.) "Ugo da Sanvittore è qui com elli, E Pietro Mangiadore, e Pietro Ispano Lo qual già luce in dodici libelli". In addition to other works attributed to him, Pedro Hispano published a book on logic, "Sumulae Logicales", constituting of 12 treatises, that was extremely influential at the time and referred to by Dante. He also wrote the famous "Thesaurus Pauperum" (People's Thesaurus), where he revealed prescriptions and medications to be administered to all social classes, in accordance with the doctrines of Claudio Galeno and classic Greek, Roman and Arab authors. These were treatments that all people could actually use - rather than those which were inaccessible due to their high costs. The "Thesaurus Pauperum" was published in 81 editions, 70 of which were manuscript editions, between the 13th and 18th centuries, in Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Austria and England. The oldest printed edition was published in 1494 in Venice, followed by a 1497 edition in Antwerp. This book includes treatments for a wide array of clinical situations and also mentions treatment of several urological complaints including tenesmus, strangury, swelling of the testicles and penis ailments.

*Strangury* - 1. Apply heated oxen excrement mixed with honey, to the pubis. *Tested*. 2. Idem, take three Spanish flies and consume them with some goat's milk, after removing their heads and wings; they will resolve the strangury. *Avicena*. 4. Idem, Ground bedbugs, mixed with olive oil and hedgehog fat; apply the mixture to the penis and pubis; powerful stimulus for urination; better still when entering a diuretic bath and urinating. *Dioscórides*. 8. Idem, produce a plaster from chicken, goose and hedgehog fat, groundsel seed and saxifrage and billy goat's blood. *This is mine*.

*Swelling of the testicles* - 1. If the testicles swell, bean flour diluted in common olive oil and dwarf-elder juice will immediately reduce the swelling. *Dioscórides*. 3. The same effect is achieved by means of dwarf-elder leaves and elder-tree leaves. *This is mine*. 4. Idem, goat excrement diluted in wine will resolve the entire tumour. *Cirano*.

*Penis ailments* - 1. If the penis swells and hurts, mix together wax, olive oil and purslane juice and apply the mixture; its efficacy is proven. *Constantino*. 3. Idem against cancer of the penis and in other parts of the body: ground olive tree leaves with honey will cure the complaint. *Constantino*. 4. Idem a sprinkling of ground, succulent azebres which admirably cures cancerous ulcers. *Constantino*.

Independently of the elaborate treatments which Pedro Hispano recommended, many of which now appear rather obscure, it is important to note the care he takes in referring to the experimental part of medical knowledge, referring to the terms "tested and untested" and citing the origin of the prescription, referring to his own inventions as "this is mine".

The "Thesaurus Pauperum" is considered to be the forerunner of modern "general medicine" books. It was widely disseminated over a period of five centuries as confirmed by the number of editions published. Various urological problems were thereby divulged and treatments recommended. Petrus Hispanus, Pedro Hispano, a medical physician and urologist, who became Pope João XXI, was nonetheless able to separate the experimental dimension from the spiritual and superstitious dimension of medicine that tended to prevail in the distant past.



**Milan**  
26-29 March 2008

**23rd Annual EAU Congress**  
[www.eaumilan2008.org](http://www.eaumilan2008.org)



**EAU** European Association of Urology