A doctor (urologist) who became pope: Petrus Hispanus (13th century)

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 Pedro Lusitanus. A renowned black 9lar, he pursued his ecclesiastical career in Portugal (Mapta, Oporto, Lisbon, Braga and Guimarães).

He left the country in 1257, from where he travelled to France and Italy, practicing medicine and teaching this discipline at the universities of Siena (1259) and Paris. In 1265 he moved to Viterbo, where he was consulted by eminent figures of the period, including the future Pope Adrian 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 Adrian 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 e qui con ellì, E Pietro Mangiadore, e Pietro Ispano Io qual già luce in dodici libelli”. In addition to other works attributed to him, Pedro Hispano published a book on logic, “Sumulae Logicales”, consisting 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 15th centuries as confirmed by the number of editions published. Various urological problems were thereby treated 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. Pedro 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.