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COVER EDITORIAL

Turkish scientist Hulusi Behçet (1889–1948) and his contribution to the medical world

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Biography of Hulusi Behçet (1889–1948)

Hulusi Behçet was born in Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire, on 20 February 1889 [1, 2]. He was raised by his grandmother as he lost his mother while he was a child. He went to Damascus because of his father's duties and graduated primary school with French, Latin, and German languages [2]. In 1914, Behçet completed his training in dermatology and venereal diseases at Gulhane Military Medical Academy in Istanbul [2]. Then, he worked at Edirne, Haskoy, and Guraba Hospitals and moved to Budapest and then to Charité Hospital in Berlin [2]. Following the institution of the Republic of Turkey, Behçet was appointed professor of the Department of Dermatology and Venereal Diseases in 1933 and he published almost 140 scientific papers, about 20 medical translations, and two medical books (Fig. 1) [2]. He was described as a shy and introverted but joyful and good-humored man, though he suffered from ill health due to insomnia, spastic colitis, and angina pectoris [2]. Lastly, he suddenly died from a heart attack in 1948, at the age of 59 [2].

Description of Behçet's disease or syndrome by Hulusi Behçet

Clasically, the famous disease that bears his name—Behçet's disease or syndrome—has taken roots from his "three patients," which were examined by Hulusi Behçet: The first patient had been investigated by many physicians in Istanbul and Vienna without any diagnosis; then, the patient had become blind by the time he visited Behçet in 1924; The second patient was a woman with similar complaints composed of recurrent lesions in her mouth, eyes, and genital regions at the time she visited Behçet in 1930; and the third patient had fever and abdominal pain in addition to the findings of the second patient when observed by Behçet in 1936 [2]. Based on his clinical experiences from these patients, Behçet ascribed the signs and symptoms, known as traditional "Behçet's triad", to a new, single, and specific disease, a possible result of viral infection [2]. Then, many authors from the the USA, Japan, Israel, and some countries in Europe began to report similar cases following publication of his exotic cases in an international journal in 1937 [2, 3]. In 1947, Alfred

Fig. 1 Photograph of Dr. Hulusi Behcet (1889–1948) (from en.wikipedia.org)

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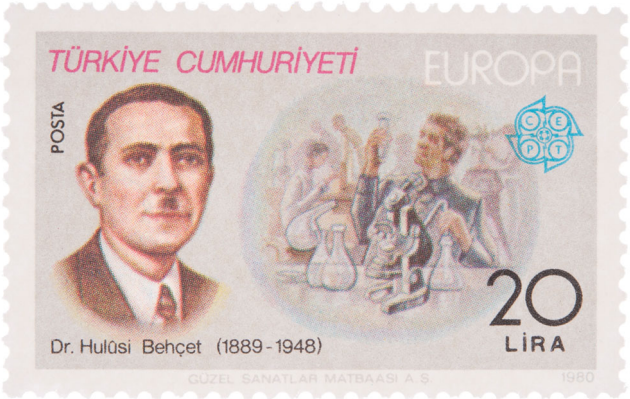

Fig. 2 and cover Turkish stamp depicting Hulusi Behçet, Europa CEPT, 1980 (Reprinted from the original copy of the stamp with the written permission of the Republic of Turkey Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure the General Directorate of Postal Affairs, Stamp Museum, Ankara, Turkey)

Guido Miescher (1887–1961), professor and chief of the University Dermatology Clinic in Zurich, suggested that the disease should be called "Morbus Behçet" (Behçet's disease) at the International Congress of Dermatology in Geneva, Italy [2]. Today, Hulusi Behçet is the most famous figure of the modern Turkish medical school (Fig. 2 and cover).

Behçet's disease or syndrome, is an autoimmune vasculitis characterized by oral and genital ulcerations, uveitis, and involvement of the skin, joints, intestinal tract, blood vessels, and, in some cases, the central nervous system, with remissions and exacerbations in cases living in the Middle East and Central Asia [1, 2]. Even today, diagnosis and therapy of the disease is still challenging for pediatric neurologists and neurosurgeons because of its rarity and non-specific presentation in childhood [1].

Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest The authors have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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