THE CAREER OF THE DOCTOR OF MEDICINE AND PHILOSOPHY STEFANO LORENZO BISIO IN THE GRAND DUCHY OF LITHUANIA

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ABSTRACT  The doctor of medicine and philosophy Stefano Lorenzo Bisio (1724–1800?) worked in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania between 1762/3 and 1787. During this quarter of a century, he earned renown as a private physician to magnates, an innovator in the science of medicine, and as one of the founders of academic medicine in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Regardless of this, only one of the last stages of Bisio’s career has received much attention in historiography so far, his becoming the first head of the College of Medicine, established at Vilnius University in 1781. In this article, I seek to give as comprehensive as possible a presentation of Bisio’s entire career in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, discussing thoroughly his academic activities and achievements. Through these achievements, I hope to show that he was one of the first to apply West European anatomical, pathological and clinical medical knowledge from the Age of Enlightenment, which itself was undergoing qualitative breakthroughs, in the GDL. In the article, I also correct and present new biographical facts about S.L. Bisio, his birth and death dates, work and education placesfamily, and work relations.

KEYWORDS:  Grand Duchy of Lithuania; Enlightenment; Bisio; Vilnius University; medicine; research; science.

Introduction

‘O Bisio! You live for people [...] At the same time, with friends [you share] tenderness and joy, with the Academic school knowledge, and bring the country benefit and glory.’¹ With these lines, the poet Xawier Zubowski congratulated his friend, the doctor of medicine and philosophy, Stefano Lorenzo Bisio (1724–1800?) on his birthday on 14 February 1786. At the time, Bisio, originally from Italy, was already in the golden years of his career and his life. During the

¹ Zebrany Wiersz Xawiera Zubowskiego K. K. Appendo functum carmine barbitum, t. 1 (Warszawa, 1786), pp. 104–105.
quarter of a century that he spent in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Bisio wrote several innovative medical works based on the latest medical achievements of the Age of Enlightenment, becoming one of the founders of modern anatomy and physiology in the country, not to mention the head of the College of Medicine which was established at Vilnius University in 1781. The purpose of this article is to analyse Bisio’s career in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (henceforth GDL), presenting his academic achievements, works and their relevance in the European context at the time. I also seek to correct some biographical facts that have become entrenched in historiography, and provide new information about dates in his life, his education, family and work relations.

Despite all Bisio’s achievements in medicine in the GDL, little is known about this man in historiography, the existing data is mostly encyclopedic in nature, repetitive, and lacking in deeper analysis of his activities and biographical facts. A more thorough discussion exists on the stage in his life relating to his activities as a professor of anatomy and physiology, highlighting it with the founding of the College of Medicine at Vilnius University and its first years of activity.

2 S. Bisio, *Epistola medico-anatomica de morbo quatuordecim annorum ad rationales medicinae professeores. List doktorski y anatomiczny o chorobie od lat czternastu do doskonałych medycyny nauczycieli* (Wilno, 1770); S. Bisio, *Respomsum Stephani Bisii Philisphiae et Mediciniae Doctoris ad Amicum Philosophum, De melancholiah, mania et Plica–Polonica* (Vilnae, 1772); S. Bisio, *Epistola medico-anatomica de methodo adhibita in curatione febris malignae malignorum refellens obtrectationes ad rationales philosophiae et medicinae professeores* (Vilnae, 1773).

3 S. Ciampi, *Notizie di medici, maestri di musica e cantori, pittori, architetti, scultori ed altri artisti italiani in Polonia e Polacchi in Italia* (Lucca, 1830), p. 39; L. Gąsiorowski, *Zbiór wiadomości do historyi sztuki lekarskiej w Polsce*, t. 3 (Poznań, 1854), pp. 170–171; A. Wrzosek, ‘Bisio Stefan’, Polski słownik biograficzny, t. 2 (Kraków, 1936), p. 109; F. Giedroyć, *Źródła biograficzno-bibliograficzne do dziejów medycyny w dawnej Polsce* (Warszawa, 1911), pp. 76, 565–567; Dr. J.K., *Encyklopedia powsszechna*, t. 3 (Warszawa, 1860), pp. 584–585.

4 J. Bieliński, *Uniwersytet Wileński (1579–1831)*, t. 3 (Kraków, 1899–1900), pp. 126–127; V. Mielachneris, *Vilnius – senasis medicinos mokslo židinys* (Vilnius, 1956); I. Petruskienė, ‘Medicina Vilniaus universitete’, *Moklas ir Gyvenimas*, 3 (1973), pp. 8–9; V. Bogušis, ‘Medicina Vilniaus universitete iki XVIII a. vidurio’, *Vilniaus medicinos istorijos almanachas* (Vilnius, 1997), pp. 15–29; D. Sabat, ‘The Historical Outline of Vilnius Pathological Anatomy in the First Half of the 19th Century’, *Polish Journal of Pathology* (2004), pp. 75–81; S. Biziulevičius, ‘Anatomijos ir fiziologijos mokslo raida Vilniaus Universitete, XVIII a. pabaigoje ir XIX a. pirmoje pusėje’, *Iš moksly istorijos Lietuvoje*, t. 1 (Vilnius, 1960), pp. 88–96.
The studies by Janina Kamińska, Aurimas Andriušis and Angelė Rimavičienė are noteworthy in this context, as they give a more comprehensive account of the circumstances behind the establishment of the College of Medicine, and the issue of Bisio’s appointment as its head. The paper by Adam Ferdynand Adamowicz, which is a review of the history of anatomy in Lithuania and Poland, is also significant in the framework of this study, not so much for the facts that are given about Bisio, but for the circular by the Bishop of Vilnius Ignatius Jokūbas Masalskis (Ignacy Jakób Massalski) from 1773 that Adamowicz published in his paper. In this circular, he defended Bisio from the criticism he attracted regarding his treatment methods. Vaiva Klaumaitė, meanwhile, was the first to shed more light on Bisio’s version of the reasons for the plica polonica, or kołtun (considered an incurable disease in his time), and later discussions on this illness.

The main sources used in this study are the scientific works published by Bisio himself, as they give the best indication of his ideas, the medical knowledge he shared with others, and the treatment methods he applied. In the article, I shall use Bisio’s scientific works composed and printed in Vilnius in the period 1770–1773, written in the polemic genre form: on the 14-year continuing disease (1770), on melancholy, mania and plica polonica (1772), and on ways of treating fever (1773). Virtually all of these works by Bisio are mentioned in earlier historiography; however, their content has not been presented very thoroughly, nor has it been analysed or discussed in the broader context of European medical science.

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5 J. Kamińska, *Universitas Vilnensis: Akademia Wileńska i Szkoła Główna Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego 1773–1792* (Warszawa, 2012).
6 A. Andriušis, A. Rimavičienė, ‘Institucinė medicinos mokslų pradžia Vilniaus universitete: nuo Vilniaus medicinos mokylklos iki Collegium Medicum (1775–1781)’, *Vilniaus medicinos istorijos almanachas*, t. 2 (Vilnius, 2006), pp. 17–25.
7 A.F. Adamowicz, *Krótki rys początków i postępu anatomii w Polsce i Litwie* (Wilno, 1855).
8 V. Klaumaitė, ‘Kaltūno fenomenas šventybės anomalėjimo perspektyvoje’, *Naujasis Židinys–Aidai*, 1 (2012), pp. 41–45.
9 S. Bisio, *Epistola medico-anatomica de morbo quatuordecim*.
10 S. Bisio, *Responsum*.
11 S. Bisio, *Epistola medico-anatomica de methodo*.
12 J. Bieliński, *Uniwersytet Wileński*, pp. 126–127; V. Micelmacheris, *Vilnius–senasis medicinos mokslų židinys*; I. Petruskienė, ‘Medicina Vilniaus universitete’, pp. 8–9; V. Bogošis, ‘Medicina Vilniaus universitete iki XVIII a. vidurio’, pp. 15–29; D. Sabat, ‘The Historical Outline’, pp. 75–81; S. Biziulevičius, ‘Anatomijos ir fizioligijos’, pp. 88–96, et al.
Bisio’s work *Responsum Stephani Bisii Philosophiae et Mediciniae Doctoris ad Amicum Philosophum, De melancholia, mania et Plica–Polonica* has received more attention. Earlier researchers have drawn attention to Bisio’s achievements in studying the phenomenon of the *plica polonica*; however, his contribution to the examination of other mental illnesses and explanations of their emergence remains unknown. Bisio’s other two books published in Vilnius have also not been the topic of broader research nor assessed in historiography: *Epistola medico-anatomica de morbo quatuordecim annorum ad rationales medicinae professores* and *Epistola medico-anatomica de methodo adhibita in curatione febris malignae malignorum refellens obtructiones ad rationales philosophiae et medicinae professores*. The latter work on methods of treating fever is very important to this article, because in it Bisio provides personal data about his education, patients, and professional activities, allowing us to learn about his life, and supplement it with new facts.

An account of the lectures given at Vilnius University in the period 1781 to 1785 helps to illustrate the erudition of this article’s subject, some aspects of anatomy and physiology that he considered to be important, and his pedagogical aims. Meanwhile, two descriptions of operations by Fryderyk Ludwig Oehme, the Nesvyzh Radziwiłłs’ doctor and surgeon (on the removal of a bladder stone and a tumour in the left breast), that were published in 1773 allow us to better understand Bisio’s academic interests. Letters written about Bisio

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13 V. Klajumaitė, ‘Kaltūno fenomenas’, p. 44; A.F. Adamowicz, *Krótki rys początków*, pp. 23–24; V. Micelmacheris, *Vilnius – senasis medicinos moksly židinys*; I. Petrauskienė, ‘Medicina Vilniaus universitete’, pp. 8–9.

14 *Universitas et Academia Vilnensis Olim a Valeriano Protasewicz Vilnensium Antistite Condicta a Gregorio XIII. P. M. a Stephano Bathoreo Aliisque Polonæ Regibus Atque ab Universitas Regni Ordinibus Probata et Confirmata Nunc ab Amplissimo Collegio Praefectorum Institutioni Publicæ Instaurata, ac Nomine Scholæ Principis Insignita* (Vilnae, 1781).

15 F.L. Oehme, *Opisanie kamienia przez dwadzieścia dwa lata w uretze noszonego* (Nieswiż, 1773).

16 Idem., *Obserwacya lewey piersi niewieście po części skancerowaney* (Nieswiż, 1773).

17 Marcin Poczobutt’s letter from Vilnius to the unknown addressee, Biblioteka Narodowa (henceforth – BN), mf. 43705 (Vilnius, 28 December 1772), p. 8; and (Vilnius, 1776) p. 23; M. Poczobutt’s letter to unknown addressee, (s.a., s.l.) BN, mf. 43705, pp. 63–64.
The first stage in Bisio’s career in the GDL: private practice and scientific work

Stefano Lorenzo Bisio de Frexoniensis was born on 14 February 1724, which we know from the poem written for him by Zubowski to mark the doctor’s 62nd birthday. This fact was confirmed, also dispelling all doubts about the doctor’s place of origin, with the discovery of a memorial plaque made by Bisio’s grandchildren, and his baptismal record which a researcher of local history Dominico Bisio found in a church in Fresonara (Piedmont, Italy).

18 S. Bisio’s letters to the Radziwiłł family, Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych (henceforth – AGAD), AR, Dz. V, mf. 47372 (Venice, 9 August 1790), pp. 1–3; (Vilnius, 8 April 1782), pp. 4–5; (Vilnius, 8 February 1776), pp. 6–8; (Biały Kamien, 21 February 1766), p. 9.

19 S. Bisio’s letters to M. Poczobutt from Lviv, 1779–1781, Vilniaus universiteto bibliotekos Rankraščių skyrius (henceforth – VUB RS), f. 2, b. DC53, pp. 16–28.

20 S. Bisio’s letter to M.J. Poniatowski (Vilnius, 5 February 1787), VUB RS, f. 2, b. DC 53, p. 129; M.J. Poniatowski’s reply to S. Bisio (Warsaw, 17 February 1787), VUB RS, f. 2 b. DC 53, p. 30.

21 G. Forsteris, Laiškai iš Vilniaus, ed. J. Kilius (Vilnius, 1988).

22 Earlier historiography indicates a year of birth of 1720, e.g. Dr. J.K., Encyklopedyja powszechna, pp. 584–585; J. Bielinski, Uniwersytet Wileński, pp. 126–127.

23 Zebrany Wiersz Xawiera Zubowskiego K. K. Appendo functum carmine barbitum, p. 104.

24 D. Bisio, ‘Il medico de Re di Polonia’, in: Il Solaio, Fresonara (December 2010 and April 2011), n. pag. I am grateful to Dominic Bisio for his advice and the opportunity to use these texts.
finds reveal that Stefano Lorenzo Bisio was born in this city in 1724 after the Ides of February\textsuperscript{25} into the family of the nobles Paulo Laurencius and Francesca, and was baptised several days later in Fresonara church.\textsuperscript{26} Stefano Lorenzo left the city of his birth for the nearby Pavia University to pursue his studies, where he graduated with a doctoral degree in medicine and philosophy in 1746.\textsuperscript{27} Some years later, he was authorised to engage in the practice of medicine at the medical college of Turin, and later at the medical college of Venice, which is where he practised prior to arriving in the Commonwealth.\textsuperscript{28} This could explain why Bisio’s contemporary Johann Andreas Lobenwein, talking about early courses in anatomy at Vilnius University, indicated in 1815 that the doctor was from Venice. It was also referred to by later historians who wrote about the medical doctor.\textsuperscript{29} Bisio arrived in the Commonwealth in 1762 or 1763, having accepted an invitation from Anna Paulina Sapiehówna-Jabłonowska, the wife of the voivode of Bratslav, to work as her doctor on the Siemiatyce estate near Drohiczyn.\textsuperscript{30}

Sapiehówna-Jabłonowska was typical of the Age of Enlightenment, eager to learn, with a passionate interest in the natural sciences and various innovations in medicine, and especially obstetrics and illness prophylaxis. She established a large library at her manor, plus a natural history museum, where she kept various exhibits from all over the world.\textsuperscript{31} Thus, it is likely that her estate served as an excellent space for Bisio to express himself, not just as a practising

\textsuperscript{25} That is, 14 February. E.g.: http://penelope.uchicago.edu/~grout/encyclopaedia_romana/calendar/juliancalendar.html (accessed on 15 04 2017).
\textsuperscript{26} D. Bisio, ‘Il medico de Re di Polonia’, n. pag.
\textsuperscript{27} S. Bisio, \textit{Epistola medico-anatomica de metodo}, pp. 48–49.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.; Dr J. K. \textit{Encyklopedyja powszechna}, pp. 584–585.
\textsuperscript{29} J. A. Lobenwein, \textit{Zagajenie publicznego posiedzenia Uniwersytetu Wileńskiego} (Wilno, 1815), p. 18; the idea that Bisio was born in Venice was suggested by: S. Ciampi, \textit{Notizie}, p. 39; K. J. Estreicher, \textit{Bibliografia polska}, t. XIII (Kraków, 1894), p. 151, and others; Bieliński indicated that Bisio was born in Pavia: J. Bieliński, \textit{Uniwersytet Wileński}, p. 126.
\textsuperscript{30} When writing about the \textit{plica polonica} in 1772, Bisio indicated that he had already been living in Poland for ten years: S. Bisio, \textit{Responsum}, p. 2; also, S. Bisio, \textit{Epistola medico-anatomica de metodo}, pp. 49–50.
\textsuperscript{31} I. Arabas, ‘Pharmaca in the Natural History Cabinet of the Duchess Anna Jabłonowska of Siemiatyce’, \textit{41st International Congress for the History of Pharmacy} (Paris, 2013). I am grateful to the director of the Vilnius University Museum, Ramūnas Kondratas, and Iwona Arabas, for the chance to become familiar with the presentation. A. Wrzosek, ‘Bisio Stefan’, p. 109.
doctor, but also as an active medical scientist. Having spent around five years at Siemiatycze, he started to practise at the court of the Duke of Nesvyzh, Karol Stanisław Radziwiłł *Panie Kochanku*.\(^{32}\) The first record of his service with this family is dated 21 February 1766, when he helped to save a lady who was seriously ill with pneumonia at the Biały Kamien estate (the lady was most likely Teresa Karolina Rzewuska, the wife of K.S. Radziwiłł).\(^{33}\) Whilst practising for the Nesvyzh Radziwiłłs, Bisio achieved fame as a specialist in anatomy. He spent several years there (1766–1772), but, as we can gather from his later correspondence, the Radziwiłłs remained close to his heart for the rest of his life. When writing to them, Bisio discussed important events in his life, also providing members of the family with advice on various medical matters.\(^{34}\)

While he was still working at Nesvyzh, in 1770, Bisio visited Vilnius, where he treated a man of noble descent aged around 40. As we can gather from the doctor’s notes, he was someone in K.S. Radziwiłł’s inner circle, who by that time was the Vilnius voivode.\(^{35}\)

That same year, a small book in epistolary form was printed in Latin and Polish: *Epistola medico-anatomica de morbo quatuordecim annorum ad rationales medicinae profesores*.\(^{36}\) In the first part, he gave a detailed account of the patient’s physical features, his condition, his symptoms, his daily mood, and the methods used to treat him.\(^{37}\) Bisio referred to the practical medical works of the Italian Giorgio Baglivi, a very well-respected authority in West European medicine in the 18th century when looking for the causes of the illness. Applying a statement from these works that in the case of certain symptoms it was important to get a clear understanding of

\(^{32}\) S. Bisio, *Epistola medico-anatomica de methodo*, p. 50.

\(^{33}\) S. Bisio’s letter to the Radziwiłł family, AGAD, AR, Dz. V, mf. 47372, (Bialy Kamien, 21 February 1766, p. 9; B. R., ‘Bialy kamien’, *Słownik Geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich*, t. 1 (Warszawa, 1880), pp. 198–199.

\(^{34}\) S. Bisio’s letters to the Radziwiłł family, AGAD, AR, Dz. V, mf. 47372, (Venice, 9 August 1790), pp. 1–3; (Vilnius, 8 April 1782), pp. 4–5; (Vilnius, 8 February 1776), pp. 6–8; (Biały Kamien, 21 February 1766), p. 9.

\(^{35}\) Bisio does not give the patient’s name in his book. We can assume the importance of the individual based on the fact that when he died, Bisio claimed, the whole voivodeship was in mourning: S. Bisio, *Epistola medico-anatomica de morbo quatuordecim*, p. 17.

\(^{36}\) Ibid., p. 1.

\(^{37}\) Ibid., pp. 2–14.
the types of complaints the patient had suffered in the past, Bisio questioned his patient, and found that the fever, bad stomach and prostate pain, and difficulties in urinating, were caused by gonorrhoea, a venereal disease the patient had developed and not sought treatment for for 14 years. Bisio stated that it was the patient’s own fault for not seeking medical advice in time from doctors who were skilled in its treatment, and letting it develop as far as this dangerous stage. Knowing that the disease could end in death, Bisio tried to find new ways of treating it; to make urination easier, he fitted the patient with a catheter to his urinary tract. Almost four months after the patient first came to see him, on 25 October, Bisio wrote an open letter, in which he asked educated doctors who might know how to help treat this patient, to contact him and share their insights. It is unlikely that Bisio received any effective help. In the second part of his book, the doctor stated that various charlatans whom the patient had trusted, each applying their own questionable methods, had made the treatment more difficult, as had the patient’s own mistrust of Bisio’s instructions. According to the doctor, this led to the death of the patient within a month. After his death, with the agreement of the deceased patient’s family and with the help of a barber, Bisio performed a dissection of the corpse. Even though there are claims in earlier historiography that this autopsy was public and was carried out in the presence of other medical doctors and students, Bisio makes no mention in his book of other participants. Nevertheless, it can be said that this was the first scientific and thoroughly publicised study of a particular illness, and the first pathological autopsy on a human body in the GDL. Having performed the dissection, the scientist comprehensively described each organ and the pathologies he encountered. According to the

38 Ibid., p. 4.
39 Ibid., pp. 4–5.
40 Ibid., p. 12.
41 Ibid., p. 11.
42 Ibid., pp. 15–17.
43 Ibid., pp. 17–19.
44 J. Bieliński, Uniwersytet Wileński, p. 137; S. Biziulevičius, ‘Anatomijos ir fiziologijos’, p. 89.
45 Wł. Zahorski, ‘Gabinet anatomiczny Uniwersytetu i Akademii Medyko-Chirurgicznej w Wilnie’, Krytyka Lekarska, t. IV (Warszawa, 1900), p. 269; A. F. Adamowicz, Krótki rys początków, p. 22.
latest dissection practices in Europe at the time, he compared the observed organ malformations with various theoretical and practical knowledge, searching for the functional disorders of the bodily organs that led to the illness and eventual death. He also determined the cause of the patient’s death: an outbreak of gangrene in the urinary tract and genital organs.

Whilst still serving at Nesvyzh, Stefano Bisio met Fryderyk Ludwig Oehme, another doctor and surgeon who worked there. The latter worked for the Radziwiłłs from 1753 to 1755, and was held in high regard by other medical personnel at Nesvyzh. As it became evident from the printed works of Oehme, while they still worked together at the Radziwiłłs, the two doctors shared with each other the latest knowledge on surgery, anatomy and treatments, and took a similar approach to medical innovations and progress.

In 1773, Oehme performed two successful and quite complicated breast tumour and urinary tract stone removal operations, which was then considered completely new in the GDL, and dedicated the research results to his colleague Bisio. In the description of the urinary tract stone removal operation, Oehme appealed to Bisio, who in his words was an excellent and knowledgeable specialist, for his scientific opinion, which would allow him to better understand the reasons why such large stones formed. Writing about the breast tumour removal operation, the surgeon stated that his patient made a full recovery, but that he was still waiting for Bisio’s opinion about the treatment methods he had applied. Oehme also wrote that Bisio was well aware of how difficult it was to convince people suffering from such illnesses that surgery was necessary. The patients would usually choose to endure terrible pain rather than trust in a surgical operation. For this reason, he decided to write a thorough account of

46 F. Zampieri, A. Zanatta, G. Thiene, ‘An etymological „autopsy“ of Morgagni’s title: De sedibus et causis morborum per anatomen indagatis (1761)’, *Human Pathology*, 45 (2014), pp. 13–14.
47 S. Bisio, *Epistola medico-anatomica de morbo quatuordecim*, pp. 17–19.
48 Ibid., p. 20.
49 F. L. Oehme’s letter to the Radziwiłł family (Biała, 1753 and 1755), AGAD, AR, Dz. V, mf. 10682, pp. 1–2.
50 K. Zuba, ‘Chirurdzy, felczerzy, i cirulicy w dobrach Radziwiłłów linii niesiwskiej w XVIII w.’, *Medycyna nowożytna. Studia nad historią medycyny*, t. 6, 1 (1999), p. 85.
51 F.L. Oehme, *Opisanie*; idem., *Obserwacya*.
52 Idem., *Opisanie*, n. pag.
this case and publicise it, thereby seeking to help other colleagues facing the same problems, and to increase the public’s trust in surgeons. At that time, Bisio no longer lived in Nesvyzh; however, as we can gather from these publications, he still shared his scientific interests, discoveries and thoughts with his former colleague.

In around 1772, Bisio started to work in the capital of the GDL, to where he was invited at the initiative of Bishop Ignacy Jakub Massalski. The bishop was convinced that the city would be well served by such a doctor, who was recognised by the most famous Italian academies, with good degrees in philosophy and medicine, a man whom he alleged to have known for many years. At around the same time, Bisio signed a contract with the Jesuit Academy of Vilnius, and became a doctor at this institution, while also engaging in private practice, providing medical advice and sharing his scientific ideas with the bishop. It appears that, due to his work at the Jesuit Academy, some researchers have mistakenly called Stefano Lorenzo Bisio a Jesuit himself. This doctor of medicine and philosophy had nothing in common with the Order: he had married a Polish woman, Katarzyna, who, according to his colleague Forster, was not very well disposed towards the doctor: ‘an angry old hag from Lviv, who pitted him against the rest of the world, with her angry, obnoxious tongue’.

While living in Vilnius, Bisio engaged in research activities, and wrote two more polemical works. One of the more significant works revealing his innovative and courageous ideas appeared in 1772. This was the small-format book *Responsum Stephani Bisii Philosophiae et Medicinae Doctoris ad Amicum Philosophum, De melancholia, mania et Plica–Polonica*. In it, he presented a new version of what,
in his opinion, melancholy, mania and *plica polonica* were. These three maladies had been considered serious illnesses of the soul in the society of the GDL, usually explained as God’s punishment or the expression of evil (Satanic) powers.\(^{59}\) Bisio gave a very rational account of these illnesses, basing his explanations on his knowledge of human physiology and anatomy. In the work, he gives descriptions of mania and melancholy, adding an account of the composition of the human brain, referring to the latest research on human anatomy from Western Europe.\(^{60}\) He also explained that the reasons for these illnesses were not supernatural or anomalies of the soul, but arose from changes in brain activity and the blood vessels, which is what determined the affected person’s strange behaviour.\(^{61}\)

He also presented a very important and new opinion about a specific disease that plagued the society of the GDL, known as the *plica polonica* or *koltun*.\(^{62}\) Externally, this disease was hair that would become matted and impossible to comb, resulting in a painful scalp full of sores and infested with lice.\(^{63}\) As far back as in the 16th century, *plica polonica* was considered an independent and serious illness all over Europe; many eminent medical doctors of the day contemplated and discussed its causes and appearance.\(^{64}\) There were opinions among medical doctors in the GDL and Poland that the *plica polonica* was an infectious disease that could spread throughout the whole body, while the matted hair was just one of

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\(^{59}\) S. Biziulevičius, ‘Anatomijos ir fiziologijos’, p. 90.

\(^{60}\) S. Bisio, *Responsum*, pp. 2, 10.

\(^{61}\) Ibid., pp. 3–4.

\(^{62}\) Ibid., pp. 6, 14–15.

\(^{63}\) „Kaltūnas – nešvara ar liga?“, http://www.sveikaszmogus.lt/index.php?pagrid=straipsnis&strid=509 (accessed on 01 06 2017).

\(^{64}\) L. Gąsiorowski, *Zbiór wiadomości do historii sztuki lekarskiej w Polsce*, p. 54; S. Slonimskis, *Материалы по истории медицины в Литве* (Kaunas, 1929), p. 30; В.Г., Мицельмахерис, *Очерки по истории медицины в Литве* (Ленинград, 1967), p. 68. A special term had even been conceived ‘*Plicaelogia*’ to define and examine this especially serious disease. It was first used by the medical doctor from Poznan Franciszek Teofil Boehm in his work *Plicaelogia sive plica polonica tractatiuncula physico-medico, non tantum pilorum physiologium sed et illius pathologiam et therapiam tradens observatiunculis raris, auctore Franc- cisco Theophilho Boehm med.doctore, physico provinciali in capitaneatu Prussiae Brandeburgiae Regiae Mariae insulano et Riesienburgensi, practico Posnaniensi* (Francfurti ad Viadrum, 1708).
many characteristic symptoms. The medical doctor Joannes Innocentius Petryca wrote in 1635: ‘It is the real truth that koltun usually settles in the head, as in a castle, and from there it passes through mucus to the joints and various parts of the body affecting it.’ The fear was widespread in the society of the GDL that once the plica polonica had formed, it could in no circumstances be simply removed or cut off. Allegedly, it could result in death, and there was even a firm belief that only a miracle of God could get rid of it. In the book, Bisio claimed that during the ten years he had lived in this land, he had seen cases of plica polonica many times, and had heard many explanations for its appearance, and yet he did not think that it was an independent, infectious or sudden illness. It was merely another aspect of other serious illnesses, such as tuberculosis, arthritis, hypochondria, scurvy and often syphilis, and that it was neglected and dirty matted hair that led to symptoms such as eye pain and a heavy head. He suggested that the only proper way of healing the plica polonica was to get rid of the matted hair, as this would help the patient recover from their other illnesses.

This approach was particularly new, not just in the GDL, but in the rest of Europe as well. The work was evaluated at the end of that year by the future rector Marcin Poczobut, a professor of astronomy and mathematics at the Jesuit Academy, who said that having read this ‘dissertation about plica polonica’, he thought that it would be very beneficial to our land. Nevertheless, Bisio’s opinion on the plica polonica was not accepted in his lifetime by either scientists or the society of the GDL. Quite the opposite, the idea of the plica as an independent illness continued to be promoted, even by renowned and authoritative medical specialists such as Joseph Frank, the founder of...

65 L. Gąsiorowski, Zbiór wiadomości do historyi sztuki Lekarskiej w Polsce, pp. 178, 264, 285.
66 Ibid., p. 178.
67 V. Klajumaitė, ‘Kaltūno fenomenas’, p. 45; V. Budrys, T. Račiūnaitė, ‘Stebuklų laukas ir neurologija: neurologiniai sutrikimai Lietuvos stebuklų knygose’, http://www.neuroseminarai.lt/uploads/pdfai/Neuro_2007_Nr1_39–46.pdf (accessed on 18 04 2016).
68 S. Bisio, Responsum, pp. 3–6.
69 Ibid., pp. 17–18.
70 M. Poczobutt’s letter to unknown person, BN, mf. 43705, (Vilnius, 28 December 1772) p. 8.
71 J. Frankas, Vilnius XIX amžiuje. Atsiminimai. Pirma knyga (Vilnius, 2013), pp. 68, 232, 456.
a medical society, who practised in Vilnius in the early 19th century, as well as by several other scientists later. Bisio’s opinion found approval only in 1875, when, as part of a competition announced by the Vilnius Medical Society to find an explanation for the illness, the winner, a Polish doctor called Henrik Dobzhicki, proved that it was the outcome of folk superstitions, negligence and a lack of hygiene.

It was probably this bold work, together with an incident the following year, regarding the unsuccessful treatment of a fever in the Jesuit T. Dąmbrowski, that led to a wave of dissatisfaction among other doctors with Bisio’s treatment methods, and doubts over his knowledge of the field. On 13 May 1773, an anonymous work was published criticising Bisio’s treatment practices, on the application of unsuitable methods of treatment. Bisio himself noted that it was probably commissioned by the University of Königsberg, and later printed in Vilnius. He responded that same year, publishing his subsequent work in Vilnius, *Epistola medico-anatomica de methodo adhibita in curatione febris malignae malignorum refellens obtrectationes ad rationales philosophiae et medicinae profesores*. As he himself said, it was intended to defend his reputation, which was of the utmost importance to him, and to prove that in this particular case, he applied the best possible methods of treatment. He dedicated the book to his patron Bishop Massalski, adding that he had prepared it so that he could protect wise medical practitioners from various ignoramuses.

In the book, he went into great detail on the feverish symptoms of the patient, a 28-year-old Jesuit, how he felt each day, and the effect of his treatment on the illness. Bisio stated that he had already been treating this man for poor health, and, in his own words, as he was not looking after himself properly, he predicted the patient’s sad fate. He provided evidence of his education to his anonymous

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72 A.F. Adamowicz, *Krótki rys początków*, p. 23.
73 „Kaltūnas – nešvara ar liga?“
74 V. Klajumaitė, ‘Kaltūno fenomenas’, p. 44; L. Piechnik, *Odrodzenie Akademii Wileńskiej 1730–1773* (Rzym, 1990), p. 150.
75 F. Giedroyć, *Źródła biograficzno-bibliograficzne do dziejów medycyny w dawnej Polsce*, p. 76.
76 S. Bisio, *Epistola medico-anatomica de methodo*, p. 3.
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid., p. 27.
80 Ibid., p. 13.
opponent, together with his circle of clients, and knowledge of the ideas of recognised European authorities in medicine, listing the findings and statements they had made that he had himself applied, and giving detailed justifications for his methods of treatment in this case of a fever he had encountered in Vilnius.\textsuperscript{81} Writing about the course of the illness and discussing it with his opponent, Bisio claimed that these days, theoretical medicine was not enough; it did not suffice to read up on descriptions of illnesses in books, and blindly apply the methods of treatment listed in textbooks. He wrote that it was necessary every time to take into consideration the specific case of each patient, and to conduct a deeper analysis, not just of the present symptoms, but also the lifestyle and past illnesses of the patient. For this reason, when writing down the history of the man’s illness, he paid attention to factors such as his parents’ health, the bodily composition of the patient, his gender, lifestyle and diet, the impact of the local climate.\textsuperscript{82} These statements about the practical gathering of information about each individual case were the main principles of clinical medicine that was then just in its early stages in Europe. They were encouraged in Lithuania in the early 19th century by Joseph Frank.\textsuperscript{83} In the book on fever, Bisio referred to medical authorities of the Age of Enlightenment, such as Germans Herman Boerhaav and Friedrich Hoffman,\textsuperscript{84} who developed the theory of the human body as an entirety of continuously operating mechanical systems, and thus became the first proponents of clinical treatment. They asserted that it was important firstly to conduct a thorough and close examination of every patient’s case; and only afterwards, having applied their broad medical knowledge, can the doctor apply suitable methods of treatment.\textsuperscript{85} The Italian Giovanni Battista Morgangi, Bisio’s contemporary, played a very important role in clinical medicine, and was one of his main sources both for this book, and for his work about the 14-year-long disease.\textsuperscript{86}

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., pp. 48–125.

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., pp. 7, 11–12.

\textsuperscript{83} R. A. Kondratas, Joseph Frank (1771–1842) and the development of clinical medicine. PhD thesis (Harvard, 1977), p. 243.

\textsuperscript{84} S. Bisio, Epistola medico-anatomica de methodo, n. pag.

\textsuperscript{85} R. Megrew, Encyclopedia of Medical History (New York, 1985), pp. 68–69; R. Porter, The greatest benefit to mankind: a medical history of humanity from antiquity to the present (London, 1999), pp. 246–250.

\textsuperscript{86} S. Bisio, Epistola medico-anatomica de methodo, pp. 53, 104–105; S. Bisio, Epistola medico-anatomica de morbo quatuordecim, pp. 9, 13.
This scientist stated that in order to make a correct diagnosis of an illness and to choose the right course of treatment, finding out the post-mortem pathologies was critical, as was comparing them to theoretical medical knowledge and the patient’s examination results whilst they were still alive.\(^87\) It was probably the case that the polemical and defensive response to Bisio’s book on fever signalled the collision of old, accepted and well-known healing practices that dominated in the society of the GDL with new medical innovations that were still unfamiliar here. In Bisio’s case, they were identified as unsuitable methods of treatment, and thus demanded the firm defence of this doctor’s opinion.

Bishop Massalski, the doctor’s patron, took up his defence following the publication of the scurrilous work on Bisio’s methods of treatment. Massalski not only approved of this medical practitioner, but also agreed with the rational ideas of Enlightenment medicine, and took an active interest in the latest achievements in the field.\(^88\)

In 1773, Massalski sent a circular around his entire diocese, in which he expressed his anger over the derision directed at Bisio, and on society’s darkness, writing that this city had to lament many times the fact that an educated person capable of treating serious illnesses was forced to leave Vilnius ‘for a place that was more peaceful, as he was tired of the opposition and attacks from jealous, ignorant detractors’.\(^89\) Coming to terms with not being appreciated, and most likely because the Jesuit Order was suppressed in 1773, Bisio lost his stable source of income, and considered leaving Vilnius.

**The first head of the College of Medicine at Vilnius University**

After the Jesuit Order was abolished and the Commission for National Education took over the management of Vilnius Academy, Massalski, its chairman, raised the idea of the medical sciences having a place in the reformed Academy. Nevertheless, for unknown reasons, he did not include his favourite Italian doctor in his plans.\(^90\)

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\(^87\) F. Zampieri, A. Zanatta, G. Thiene, ‘An etymological „autopsy“ of Morgagni’s’, pp. 13–16.

\(^88\) E. Raila, *Ignotus Ignotas. Vilniaus vyskupas Ignotas Jokūbas Masalskis* (Vilnius, 2010), pp. 108, 150–153.

\(^89\) A.F. Adamowicz, *Krótki rys początków*, pp. 23–24.

\(^90\) E. Raila, *Ignotus Ignotas*, pp. 108–109.
typical Age of Enlightenment figure and magnate, the bishop was less interested in academic medicine, preferring instead practical medicine, dedicated to maintaining good health and prolonging people’s lives: obstetrics, surgery, hygiene, disease prophylaxis, and the education of ordinary people in medical matters.\(^{91}\) The Hrodna Royal School of Medicine was established in 1776, at the initiative of the supervisor and economist Antoni Tyzenhaus, which concentrated on practical knowledge for overcoming the everyday illnesses of people and animals, improving obstetrics and health protection, typical ideas arising with the Age of Enlightenment; but it did not offer degrees in medicine, or theoretical medical knowledge in line with established European norms at the time.\(^{92}\)

In 1772, the bishop sent his personal surgeon and obstetrician Nicolas Regnier to further his knowledge of obstetrics with the Paris Society of Surgery. This field of medicine and the improvements in it received a great deal of attention during the Age of Enlightenment, mainly because of the extremely high mortality rate among mothers and newborns, and the aim of reducing it by applying the latest achievements in surgery and hygiene.\(^{93}\) On his return to the GDL in 1775, Regnier was appointed to give lectures on surgery and obstetrics at Vilnius University in the newly founded School of Obstetricians.\(^{94}\) When undertaking further studies in Paris in 1777, Regnier invited Jacques Briotet, an anatomist he met there, to work in Vilnius. Briotet accepted this offer, and started teaching anatomy at Vilnius University the same year.\(^{95}\)

It is not very clear what Bisio did in the years 1774 to 1776, although it appears that he did spend some of that time in Warsaw. In 1776, he expressed his dissatisfaction over a debt that one of the Radziwills did not pay, or a promise that was not kept, in addition to his disenchantment over the private and public lectures he wanted to give in Lithuania and Poland, which would have been reasons justifying his remaining in the country.\(^{96}\) He must have had these

\(^{91}\) Ibid., pp. 122, 131, 145, 153–155.

\(^{92}\) V. Micelmacheris, *Vilnius – senasis medicinos mokslų židinys*, p. 8.

\(^{93}\) A. Parent, ‘The work of French surgeons in disseminating obstetrics in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 18th century’, *Acta medica Lituanica*, vol. 20 (2013), p. 104.

\(^{94}\) E. Raila, *Ignotus Ignotas*, p. 154.

\(^{95}\) A. Parent, ‘The work’, p. 105.

\(^{96}\) S. Bisio’s letter to the Radziwiłł family, AGAD, AR, Dz. V, mf. 47372 (Vilnius, 8 February 1776), pp. 6–8.
in mind after Massalski’ initiative to offer medical subjects at the reformed Vilnius University without including Bisio in the plans. At the end of that year, he decided to sell his rich library of specialised books to the Commission for National Education, appointing the astronomer Poczobutt to determine the collection’s value. In January 1777, the staff at the Zaluski’s public library were ordered to analyse the collection and compile a catalogue.  

In 1777, Bisio left the capital of the GDL for Lviv, his wife’s place of birth, as he had probably received a better offer of work there, or he hoped to search for a place to practise in other cities in Europe, which is something he mentioned in later years in his letters to Poczobutt.

Bisio spent several years prior to the summer of 1781 in Lviv. While there, he kept up an active correspondence with Marcin Poczobutt, a professor at Vilnius Academy and later rector. In his letters, he discussed recent research in the fields of natural science, medicine and astronomy.

Once the decision was made to establish the College of Medicine at Vilnius University in 1780, Poczobutt started to urge Bisio to come and be its head. Poczobutt, who was in charge of affairs relating to the founding of the College of Medicine, believed that Bisio’s participation in lectures there was vital, and that he had to be persuaded to return to Vilnius. Poczobutt was already familiar with the Italian’s works, and had been treated by Bisio himself in 1776. In addition, even though Regnier and Briotet already worked at the university as lecturers in medicine, they lacked the competency, education and authority to head the new college. In this sense, they were medical practitioners rather than scientists. Regnier and Briotet had authority to give public lectures, but all other doctors’ privileges were beyond their reach, and they had to be content with the practical knowledge relating to lecturing.

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97 Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej, 1773–1785, ed. M. Mitera-Dobrowolska (Wrocław, 1973), pp. 74, 79.
98 S. Bisio’s letters to M. Poczobutt (Lviv, 1779–1781), VUB RS, f. 2 b. DC 53, pp. 16–28.
99 Ibid.; J. Kamińska, Universitas Vilnensis, p. 63.
100 S. Bisio’s letters to M. Poczobutt (Lviv, 1779–1781), VUB RS, f. 2, b. DC 53, pp. 16–28; J. A Lobenwein, Zagajenie publicznego posiedzenia Uniwersytetu Wilenskiego, p. 18.
101 J. Kamińska, Universitas Vilnensis, p. 63.
102 M. Poczobutt’s letters to unknown addressee, BN, mf. 43705 (Vilnius, 28 December 1772) p. 8; and (Vilnius, 1776) p. 23.
Briotet earned his degree in medicine only in 1787, and Regnier only in 1789 from the University of Königsberg.

Initially, Bisio announced in 1781 that he planned to go to Vienna for a year, and then to Milan. However, on 25 April he wrote back to Poczobutt that he had agreed to take up the offer as head of the new College of Medicine, providing the following conditions were met: he wanted a comfortable place to live, a small library containing works on medicine, and a small garden for his wife. He was offered a large salary of 10,000 złoty, several times greater than that offered to other medical scientists being recruited to work at the new college.

Bisio is mentioned as being in Vilnius again on 12 August 1781, when, together with his wife, they became the godparents of a certain Laurentius Klarynski. Most likely in the years 1777 to 1781, when they were in Lviv, he had given medical advice or earned the gratitude in other ways of the ruler of the Commonwealth Stanisław August Poniatowski or his family, as he returned to Vilnius with the title of royal doctor and advisor, of which there is no prior mention in sources. It could also be that this was one of the privileges granted to him for agreeing to become the head of the College of Medicine.

The new College of Medicine had its grand opening at Vilnius University on 24 November 1781, under Bisio, who together with the existing lecturers Regnier and Briotet, and the French natural scientist, doctor and professor of pharmacy Jean-Emmanuel Gilibert, from the Hrodna Royal School of Medicine which had been closed

103 M. Poczobutt’s letters to unknown addressee, BN, mf. 43705, pp. 63–64.
104 A. Parent, ‘The work’, p.105.; A. Parent, ‘Prancūzų gydytojų medicinos mokslo paveldas Lietuvoje XVIII a. paskutiniame ketvirtuje (Jeanas-Emmanuelis Gilibert as, Nicolas Reignier, Jacques as Briotet)’, XVIII amžiaus studijos, t. II, Lietuvos Didžioji Kunigaikštystė. Valstybė. Kultūra. Edukacija, ed. R. Šmigelskytė-Stukienė (Vilnius, 2015), p. 142.
105 J. Kamińska, Universitas Vilnensis, pp. 63–64; S. Bisio’s letters to M. Poczobutt (Lviv, 1779–1781), VUB RS, f. 2 b. DC 53, pp. 16–28; J. Bieliński, Universytet Wilenski, pp. 126–127.
106 A. Andriušis, A. Rimavičienė, ‘Institucinė medicinos mokslų pradžia Vilniaus universitete; nuo Vilniaus medicinos mokyklos iki Collegium Medicum (1775–1781)’, Vilniaus medicinos istorijos almanachas, t. 2 (Vilnius, 2006), p. 17–25; V. Micelmacheris, Vilnius – senasis medicinos mokslų Židinys, p. 8.
107 Lietuvos mokslų akademijos Vrublevskių bibliotekos Rankraščių skyrius (henceforth – LMAVB RS), f. 318, b. 10856, l. 2.
108 Universitas et Academia Vilnensis Olim, 1781, p. 12.
that year, formed the basis of the new institution for academic medical education.\textsuperscript{109}

Earlier historiography claims that the College of Medicine at Vilnius University had opened in 1763, and that it was then headed by Bisio. The researcher Irena Petrauskienė was the first to present this version, who, like other medical history specialists who later followed in her footsteps, based their reasoning on two publications. The first, according to Petrauskienė, is a public announcement from 1763 that ‘on 22 July [of that year] at three o’clock in the afternoon first-year undergraduates at Vilnius University would have to hold public exams in general osteology and anatomy, led by the Vilnius University doctor of philosophy and medicine, president of the College of Medicine, Professor Stefano Bisio.’\textsuperscript{110} The second, according to Petrauskienė, is a poem published on 26 December of that same year, dedicated to mark Bisio’s name day, where he is referred to as the head of the College of Medicine.\textsuperscript{111} Unfortunately, during this research, neither of the mentioned publications could be found. Regardless of this, there is quite a lot of doubt as to the accuracy of dating in both these publications. Firstly, if Bisio had really already been the head of the College of Medicine that year, he surely would have made a mention of the fact in his book about ways of treating fever, where he listed all the facts about his education and his first years in the Commonwealth. In this book, he clearly highlights that after 1761 he spent five years working for Sapiehówna-Jablonowska, and later for Karol Stanisław Radziwiłł.\textsuperscript{112}

In addition, if the publications Petrauskienė cites had actually come out before 1781, they would hardly have used the term ‘College of Medicine’ (\textit{Collegium medicum}). In the speech given by the rector Poczobutt marking the start of the academic year in 1781, he stressed that all that was needed for the university to have all four necessary

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., pp. A, C2; V. Micelmacheris, \textit{Vilnius – senasis medicinos moksly židinys}, pp. 8, 12–13; A. Parent, ‘From the Montpellier Faculty of Medicine, to the Grodno Royal School of Medicine: How Dr. Jean-Emmanuel Gilibert applied medical vitalism to heal his Lithuanian patients’, \textit{XVIII amžiaus studijos: t. 3: Lietuvos Didžiojo Kunigaikštystė. Iššūkiai. Laimėjimai. Netektys} (Vilnius, 2016), pp. 210–236.

\textsuperscript{110} L. Piechnik, \textit{Odrodzenie Akademii Wiłeńskiej 1730–1773}, p. 150; V. Bogušis, ‘Medicina Vilniaus universitete iki XVIII a. vidurio’, pp. 20–21; J. Kamińska, \textit{Universitas Vilnensis}; I. Petrauskienė, ‘Medicina Vilniaus universitete’, pp. 8–9.

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{112} S. Bisio, \textit{Epistola medico-anatomica de metodo}, pp. 49–50.
colleges was a college of medicine. This is confirmed in a speech by the theology professor and university secretary Kazimierz Adam Naruszewicz given to mark the same occasion.\textsuperscript{113} Regardless of how much we would like to bring forward the beginning of academic medicine in the GDL, this idea, based on the two documents, is unfortunately unfounded.

The new College of Medicine at Vilnius University began its first academic year with lectures and practical seminars at separate premises on Pilies Street. Two auditoriums were installed, along with a space for anatomical demonstrations, offices, laboratories and residential quarters for professors. The College of Medicine also had a botanical garden. The equipment and inventory from the liquidated Hrodna Royal School of Medicine was transported to Vilnius.\textsuperscript{114} In its first year, the College of Medicine was able to offer lectures on anatomical and medical theory, surgery and obstetrics, operative surgery and anatomy.\textsuperscript{115}

Bisio gave lectures at the College of Medicine on the theory of medicine and anatomy, and in later years on anatomy and physiology.\textsuperscript{116} Based on a description of subjects on offer at Vilnius University published in 1781, we can see that he started his lectures with a short introduction to the science and history of medicine, presenting the most important scientific theories on medicine and treatment therapies.\textsuperscript{117} Later, he progressed to a comprehensive discussion of the structure of the human body, using the highest authorities in anatomy. He stressed that, whenever possible, he would use anatomically prepared parts of the human body, so that each student would know and understand how a healthy person lives, and what was necessary to keep someone alive. He also aimed to give his students an understanding of what the signs of an illness are, how the lungs, heart and vascular system function, and how ‘food travels and is digested, before being transported throughout the whole body to make it well.’\textsuperscript{118}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[113] Universitas et Academia Vilnensis Olim, pp. C2, D–E.
\item[114] V. Micelmacheris, Vilnius – senasis medicinos mokslų židinys, p. 8; A. Wrzos- sek, ‘Bisio Stefan’, p. 109.
\item[115] V. Miežutavičiūtė, R. Stukas, ‘Higienos dėstymo pradžia Vilniaus Universiteto’, Medicinos teorija ir praktika, t. 19, 3 (2013), pp. 311–314.
\item[116] G. Forsteris, Laiškai iš Vilniaus, No. 14, p. 55.
\item[117] Universitas et Academia Vilnensis, p. 12.
\item[118] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
In the section on physiology, Bisio discussed all the fluids circulating through the human body (digestive juices, sperm, milk, saliva, water, etc), and their benefit and importance to the human body. Interestingly, in this description of anatomy lectures, we notice a qualitative breakthrough in the application of the theory of the four (cardinal) humours, which was rather new in Europe at the time. According to the theory, all illnesses appeared when there was a disbalance in the four fluids existing and circulating through the human body (blood, yellow bile, black bile, phlegm).119 Born in the universities of Western Europe in the 13th century, and later on significantly enhanced, this theory and the means of diagnosis and treatment of illness that developed from it, remained the main axis of medical knowledge until the mid-18th century.120 In the description of Bisio’s lectures, the physiological fluids of a human continue to be referred to as the ‘humours’; however, they are not used to define only the main four fluids in this theory, but all the others as well, although there is no mention of the illnesses that arise when they are disbalanced. As we can gather from the description of the professor’s lectures, the only aspect that has survived from the old four humours theory is a person’s disposition (sanguine, phlegmatic, melancholic or choleric), and its influence on determining their general state of health for as long as they are alive, and yet clearly distinguishing this part from the other physiological fluids.121 This is also evident from Bisio’s methods for treating fever and the 14-year-long disease that were discussed earlier. When examining a patient’s condition, he determines his disposition: for example, whether he is a melancholic-choleric122 or a sanguine-phlegmatic.123 Nevertheless, even though these descriptions of illnesses state that certain physiological fluids did have an influence on some symptoms, they and disbalanced humours are no longer identified as the main causes of an illness.124 Conversely, the anatomical determination of

119 F. Lebrun, *Jak dawniej leczono. Lekarze, święci i czarodzieje w XVII i XVIII wieku* (Warszawa, 1997).
120 Марчукова С.М., *Медицина в зеркале истории* (Санкт-Петербург, 2003), pp. 181–182; S. Slonimskis, *Материалы по истории медицины в Литве*, p. 39; *Medieval medicine*, ed. F. Wallis (Toronto, 2010), pp. 192, 198, 255.
121 *Universitas et Academia Vilnensis Olim*, p. K.
122 S. Bisio, *Epistola medico-anatomica de morbo quatuordecim*, p. 1.
123 S. Bisio, *Epistola medico-anatomica de methodo*, p. 11.
124 E.g., S. Bisio, *Epistola medico-anatomica de morbo quatuordecim*, pp. 2–4.
pathologies of the body and its functions, more than disorders of the balance of humours, became Bisio’s main tool for recognising human illnesses. This was most likely the result of the influence of the Italian Giovanni Battista Morgagni, mentioned earlier, whom Bisio frequently cited in his works. The Italian doctor denied the importance of pathologies of the four humours in diagnosis, and elevated anatomy as the main way of understanding where illnesses lie, and what brought them on.\textsuperscript{125}

From the very beginning of medical studies at Vilnius University, Bisio and Briotet established the first academic anatomy cabinet in the GDL, which contained anatomical exhibits and preparations they had made themselves.\textsuperscript{126} Nonetheless, the first few years at the recently established College of Medicine were difficult: there was a shortage of equipment, stock and money to be able to give proper anatomy lectures. The natural scientist George Forster also mentioned this, having started working there in 1784: ‘Anatomy is in a room on the third floor of the house where we live. Each year, we receive 50 ducats, from which we need to acquire corpses (cadaver) and then bury them again, etc, not to speak of the lead coffins, injections, and preparations in spiritu vini’.\textsuperscript{127} Briotet helped Bisio conduct anatomical autopsies during lectures, serving as his assistant, and as a lecturer in practical surgery.\textsuperscript{128} It appears that in his lectures, Bisio would also experiment with animals, in order to show his students what happens in living organisms during digestion.\textsuperscript{129}

Stefano Bisio was the head of the College of Medicine for just a few years, leaving before his four-year term was complete. His post was formally given to Andrzej Strecki in 1784.\textsuperscript{130} Some years later, in 1787, Bisio resigned completely as a medical professor. Certain pages in historiography give the explanation that he was forced to do so because of his experiments with animals and anatomical

\textsuperscript{125} F. Zampieri, A. Zanatta, G. Thiene, ‘An etymological “autopsy“ of Morgagni’s’, pp. 13–14.
\textsuperscript{126} M. Biržiška, Senasis Vilniaus Universitetas. Vardų ir veikalų atranka (London, 1955), p. 79; A. Wrzosek, ‘Bisio Stefan’, p. 109.
\textsuperscript{127} G. Forsteris, Laiškai iš Vilniaus, No. 14, p. 55.
\textsuperscript{128} Universitas et Academia Vilnensis.
\textsuperscript{129} V. Micelmacheris, Vilnius – senasis medicinos moksly židinys, p. 8; A. Wrzosek, ‘Bisio Stefan’, p. 109; Wł. Zahorski, ‘Gabinet anatomiczny Uniwersytetu i Akademii Medyko-Chirurgicznej w Wilnie’, Krytyka Lekarska, t. IV (Warszawa, 1900), p. 269.
\textsuperscript{130} G. Forsteris, Laiškai iš Vilniaus, No. 19, p. 81.
preparations, and for demonstrating autopsies of the human body. These activities allegedly angered the clergy and society in the GDL at the time, although another reason could be that he felt insulted that his position as head was taken by Strecki. Nevertheless, there is a simpler reason why Bisio decided to retire from academic life. On 5 February 1787, he wrote to M.J. Poniatowski, the chair of the Commission for National Education, and asked to be relieved of his professorial duties before the end of the academic year. The doctor of medicine argued that he was asking to be released from his duties due to old age, Forster, his colleague, also mentioned the working difficulties Bisio encountered due to his advanced years, as well as being rather doubtful about the Italian, claiming that his work had completely slowed down in recent years.

‘Bisio reads anatomy and physiology in a way that ... God help him ... if it weren’t for Briotet’s preparations, he would not be capable at all; and that’s just how it is, that he says something ten times incorrectly, that he has already taught correctly. Students who have already studied in Hrodna and later attended anatomy here with my predecessor Gilibert sometimes make fun of the old man.’

Bisio’s resignation was accepted by the Commission for National Education only after the end of the academic year, in the summer of 1787. According to his contemporaries, he had amassed considerable wealth from his professorship and private medical practice, and with his earnings of around 20,000 ducats, he left Vilnius and returned to his native Italy.

The last news to reach the GDL from this medical doctor came on 9 August 1790. In a letter to one of the Radziwiłłs, probably his old patron Karol Stanisław Radziwiłł ‘My Dear Sir’, he expressed his gratitude, and stated that to his dying days he would never forget the kindness shown to him in Lithuania, and that he
was always prepared to serve this lord’s family. He related how the unrest in Europe had forced him and his wife to settle in the happy and peaceful Republic of Venice, and that at the time they were on holiday in Mestre (mainland Venice), near the old customs house, and would later move to Venice itself.\textsuperscript{136} Earlier historiography mentions that he died that same year, in 1790, in Venice.\textsuperscript{137} However, Bisio’s surname was not found in registers of the deceased in Venice in 1790–1794 in the Venetian State Archive.\textsuperscript{138} A memorial plaque on the local church in Fresonara where he was born suggests another possible date and place of death.\textsuperscript{139} It writes that in 1800 he sent silver liturgical dishes to the church from Padua, as well as a monstrance and candlesticks, and that the plaque was commissioned by his grandchildren in 1900. It could be that, based on Christian customs, Bisio made this donation as part of his will, while the plaque was hung on the 100th anniversary of his death. From this information, we can gather that the respected doctor of medicine most likely spent his last years in Padua, not in Venice, and died at least a decade later than hitherto believed.

**Conclusions**

The scientific activities of Stefano Lorenzo Bisio undoubtedly contributed to the awareness of new scientific ideas that gave rise to modern medicine, their spread and adaptation in the GDL. Partially due to luck, and partially due to his noted abilities and erudition, during the 25 years he spent in Lithuania, he came under the patronage and enjoyed the support of members of the elite of the local Enlightenment, such as Anna Paulina Sapiehówna-Jabłonowska, the Bishop of Vilnius Ignacy Massalski, and Marcin Poczobutt, who themselves had a good understanding of the benefits of applying the new rational academic knowledge, and especially the practical knowledge, of medical science, and thus promoted the activities of

\textsuperscript{136} S. Bisio’s letter to the Radziwiłł family (Venice, 9 August 1790), AGAD, AR, Dz. V, mf. 47372, pp. 1–3.
\textsuperscript{137} A. Wrzosek, ‘Bisio Stefan’, p. 109; J. Bieliński, Uniwersytet Wileński, pp. 126–127; S. Ciampi, Notizie, p. 39; Dr. J. K. Encyklopedyja powszechna, pp. 584–585.
\textsuperscript{138} Provveditori alla sanita. Necrologi. Registro dei morti: 1790–1795 febbraio 28, Archivio di Stato di Venezia, No. 977–981.
\textsuperscript{139} D. Bisio, ‘Il medico de Re di Polonia’, n. pag.
this talented doctor of medicine. He was educated in Italy. Here a whole new generation of medical scientists from the beginning of the 18th century were his most important authorities. Their bold experiments and active scientific discussions, together and with the older generation of Classical healers, led to the discovery of numerous innovations in the art of healing, determining the formation of the contemporary science of medicine. Bisio became one of the first doctors in the GDL to apply the ideas of West European medical reforms in his medical practice, and later in his pedagogical activities. He was one of the first specialists in the GDL in the fields of anatomy and pathology. He used his knowledge in these fields as his main source to learn about the reasons for various diseases and illnesses, and to perform suitable diagnoses. He proved that mental disorders, such as melancholy, mania and *plica polonica*, whose origins had hitherto been explained as being supernatural, actually had rational causes associated with disorders of human bodily functions and a lack of hygiene. When treating illnesses such as fever, he drew attention to the newly developed principles of clinical medicine, and asserted that a theoretical knowledge of medicine alone, without a thorough analysis and assessment of each individual case, was insufficient.

Also, in 1781, he became the first head of the newly established College of Medicine at Vilnius University. This institution was not only the first to spread academic medical knowledge in the GDL; it also marked the birth of modern medicine in the country, when the theoretical knowledge of illnesses and methods of treatment based on theories that had prevailed for many centuries was replaced by practical knowledge. This new approach highlighted anomalies in the anatomy of the human body and the function of the organs, and was based on knowledge and practice in line with the principles of clinical medicine.

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Šiame straipsnyje pristatoma medicinos ir filosofijos daktaro Stepono Lauryno Bizijaus (1724–1800?) biografija, analizuojama jo karjera. Iš Italijos kilęs mokslinginkas LDK teritorijoje dirbo 1762/1763–1787 m. laikotarpiu. Remiantis tyrimo metu atrastais naujais šaltiniais, straipsnyje patikslinami ir pateikiami nauji faktai, susiję su daktaro gyvenimo datomis, kilmės, išsilavinimo vietomis, šeimine padėtimi ir profesiniais santykiais.

Išanalizavus S. L. Bizijaus karjerą LDK, trukusią 25-erius metus, klientinius santykius, mokslinius darbus ir paskaitų aprašymus galima teigti, kad šis medicinos daktaras buvo vienas iš pirmųjų LDK pritaikęs Apšvietos laikotarpio pokyčius patyrusios anatomijos, patologijos ir klinikinės Vakarų Europos medicinos žinias, rėmęsis žymiausiais tų laikų mokslu autoritetais ir inovatoriais. Savo darbais S. L. Bizijus neabejotinai prisidėjo prie mokslo idėjų, lėmusi modernios medicinos gimimą, pažinimo, plėtojimo ir pritaikymo LDK. Naujausiomis anatomijos, patologijos ir fiziologijos žiniomis jis naudojosi kaip pagrindiniu šaltiniu pažinti įvairių ligų ir susirgimų priežastis ir tinkamai jas diagnozuoti; išdėdė, kad tokios psichinės ligos kaip melancholija, manija ir kaltūnas, kurių kilimą iki tol nesuteikinavo taisyklingos medžiagos, turėjo racionalias priežastis, susijusias su žmogaus kūno funkcijų sutrikimais ar net higienos trūkumu. Gydydamas tokias ligas kaip karštinė, atkreipė dėmesį į užgimusios klinikinės medicinos principus ir tvirtino, kad teorinės medicinos žinios netikslinos be išsamios individualaus atvejo analizės ir įvertinimo. Per laikotarpį, praleistą LDK, S. L. Bizijui buvo lemta dirbti asmeniniu gydymu ir teikiant mokslo aps ipvietos epochos elitui priskiriamų asmenų (vyseko Ignato Masalskio, Onos Paulino Sapiegaitės-Jablonovskos) gydymo ir tapti jų globotiniu. Būsimą Vilniaus universiteto rektoriaus M. Počobuto protekcija ir pastangos lėmė, kad paskutiniu savo gyvenimo LDK etapu S. L. Bizijus pasižymėjo kaip pirmasis 1781 m. įkurto aukštojo gydymo mokslo įstaigos – Medicinos kolegijos – vadovas, medicinos teorijos ir anatomijos profesorius.