

The oath of Amatus Lusitanus¹

I swear by eternal God... that I have never, at any time, done anything in these, my treatments, save what inviolate faith handed down to posterity. I have never feigned anything, added anything or changed anything for the sake of gain. I have always striven after this one thing, namely, that benefit might spread forth to mankind. I have praised no one and censured no one merely to indulge in private passions, unless zeal for truth demanded this.

If I lie, may I incur the eternal wrath of God... and may nothing in the medical art succeed for me according to my desires.

Concerning the remuneration which is commonly given to physicians, I have not been anxious for this but I have treated many, not only zealously but even without pay; and have unselfishly and unswervingly refused several rewards offered by many people; and have rather sought that the sick might, by my care and diligence, recover their lost health than that I might become richer by their liberality.

All men have been considered equal by me, of whatever religion they were, whether Hebrews, Christians or the followers of the Moslem faith.

As concerns loftiness of station, that has never been a matter of concern to me and I have accorded the same care to the poor as to those born in exalted rank.

I have never brought about sickness. In diagnosis I have always said what I thought to be true. I have unduly favoured no vendor of drugs except perhaps those whom I knew to surpass the others by reason of their skill in their art or because of their natural qualities of mind. In prescribing drugs I have exercised moderation in proportion as the powers of the sick man allowed.

I have revealed to no one a secret entrusted to me. I have given to no one a fatal draught. No woman has ever brought about an abortion by my aid. Nothing base has been committed by me in any house where I was practising. In short, nothing has been done by me which might be considered unbecoming an excellent and famous physician.

I have always held up to myself Hippocrates and Galen as examples worthy of being followed by me. The records of many other excellent men in the medical art have not been scorned by me.

In my method of studying I have been so eager that no task, however difficult, could lead me away from the reading of good authors, nor the loss of private fortune, nor frequent journeys, nor yet exile, which, as befits a philosopher, I have thus far borne with calm and invincible courage.

The many students which I have thus far had I have always considered my sons and have taught them very frankly and have urged them to strive to conduct themselves like good men. I have published my books of medical matters with no desire for profit but I have had regard for this one thing, namely, that I might, in some measure, provide for the health of mankind. Whether I have succeeded in this, I leave to the judgement of others. At all events, I have always held this before me, and have given it chief place in my prayers.

Given at Thessalonika, in the year of the world 5319 (1559).

Reference

1. Friedenwald Harry: The ethics of the practice of medicine from the Jewish point of view. *Johns Hopkins Hospital Bulletin No. 318*, 256-266, 1917.
(Amatus Lusitanus was born in Portugal in 1511. Reared as a marano - secret Jew - he was driven by the Inquisition to Antwerp, Ferrara and Rome. He settled in Ancona whence he was called to treat Pope Julius III. He died of the plague in 1568 in Salonica. Editor)