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# THE ORIGIN OF THE MILITARY MEDICAL ACADEMY (DEDICATED TO THE 350<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF PETER THE GREAT)

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**ABSTRACT:** In 2019, under the initiative of corresponding members of the Russian Academy of Sciences A.Ya. Fisun and V.O. Samoilov, in preparation for the celebration of the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Peter the Great, a commission was established at the Military Medical Academy to determine the date of its founding and to establish the role of the emperor in this event. The reason for this decision was a debate about the age of the academy, which has endured for more than a century. The absence of a legislative act on the establishment of the academy prevents an uncontroversial decision from being made on this issue. The conditionality of the selection of Paul I's decree of December 18, 1798 on the construction of hospital buildings became acute when the Russian State Navy Archive discovered information about a similar decree of Catherine II of April 29, 1796 on the construction of the same buildings. The collection of identified and published documents accumulated over the past 20 years allows us to state with complete certainty that the hospital schools in Saint Petersburg have been in operation practically since the very founding of the city, having been created approximately simultaneously with the famous Moscow hospital school of Nicolaas Bidloo. In 1715 the Emperor Peter the Great completed the construction of Saint Petersburg hospital schools, teachers were allocated to available pupils, and the educational and material foundation was laid in the form of two base hospitals. The assistants and advocates for these ideas of Peter the Great were the archiaters R.K. Erskine and I.L. Blumentrost. The emperor did not live to witness the final work, and the construction of buildings was completed after his death; only during the reign of Anna Ioannovna was the staff (1733) approved by the archiatrist J.H. Rieger and the uniform procedure of preparation (1735) by archiatrist J.B. von Fischer. The activities of P.Z. Kondoidi in the reign of Elizabeth Petrovna brought teaching to a new level, provided an influx of teaching staff, and expanded the list of disciplines. Under Catherine II, the schools were merged into the Main Medical College. The completion of the transformation of schools into an academy in the reign of Paul I is associated with the name of Count A.I. Vasiliev, thanks to whom, on February 12, 1799, the oldest medical school in Russia became an academy.

**Keywords:** Peter I; hospital schools; medical education; Military Medical Academy; Anna Ioannovna; Catherine II; Paul I; R.K. Erskine; I.B. Fisher; P.Z. Kondoidi; Count A.I. Vasiliev.

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## У ИСТОКОВ ВОЕННО-МЕДИЦИНСКОЙ АКАДЕМИИ (ПОСВЯЩАЕТСЯ 350-ЛЕТИЮ ИМПЕРАТОРА ПЕТРА ВЕЛИКОГО)

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**Резюме.** В 2019 г. по инициативе членов-корреспондентов Российской академии наук А.Я. Фисуна и В.О. Самойлова в рамках подготовки к празднованию 350-летия Петра Великого в Военно-медицинской академии им. С.М. Кирова была создана комиссия для определения даты ее основания и установления роли императора в этом событии. Фоном для такого решения стала длящаяся более века дискуссия о возрасте академии. Отсутствие законодательного акта об учреждении вуза не позволяет поставить точку в данном вопросе, приняв неоспоримое решение. Условность выбора указа Павла I от 18 декабря 1798 г. о строительстве госпитальных зданий проявилась со всей остротой, когда в Российском государственном архиве Военно-морского флота была обнаружена информация об аналогичном указе Екатерины II от 29 апреля 1796 г. о постройке тех же зданий. Накопленный за последние 20 лет массив выявленных и опубликованных документов позволяет с полной уверенностью утверждать, что госпитальные школы в Санкт-Петербурге работали практически с самого основания города, будучи созданы примерно одновременно со знаменитой московской школой Н.Л. Бидлоо. 1715 г. стал тем этапом, когда император Петр Великий завершил создание санкт-петербургских госпитальных школ — к имеющимся ученикам были определены педагоги и заложена учебно-материальная база в виде двух генеральных госпиталей. Помощниками и проводниками этих идей Петра были архиатры Р.К. Эрскин и И.Л. Блюментрост. Сам император при жизни не застал финал своей работы, и постройка зданий завершилась после его смерти, только в царствование Анны Иоанновны были утверждены штаты (1733) архиатром И.-Х. Ригером и единый порядок подготовки (1735) архиатром И.Б. фон Фишером. Деятельность П.З. Кондоиди в царствование Елизаветы Петровны позволила вывести обучение на новый уровень, обеспечить приток педагогических кадров и расширение перечня дисциплин. При Екатерине II школы объединены в Главное врачебное училище. Завершение преобразования школ в академию в царствование Павла I связано с именем графа А.И. Васильева, благодаря которому с 12 февраля 1799 г. старейший медицинский вуз России стал академией.

**Ключевые слова:** Петр I; госпитальные школы; медицинское образование; Военно-медицинская академия; Анна Иоанновна; Екатерина II; Павел I; Р.К. Эрскин; И.Б. Фишер; П.З. Кондоиди; граф А.И. Васильев.

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On May 30 (June 9, Gregorian calendar), 1672, the future Emperor Peter the Great was born in Moscow. At the age of 10, he was enthroned along with his older brother Ivan under the regency of his sister Sofya Alekseevna. By the end of the 1680s, clashes began between Peter and Sofya, who aspired to autocracy. In August 1689, having received news that Sofya was preparing a palace coup, Peter hastily left the village of Preobrazhenskoye near Moscow for the Trinity-Sergius Monastery (now Sergiev Posad), where troops loyal to him and his supporters arrived. Armed detachments of noblemen, gathered by Peter's staffettes, surrounded Moscow. Sofya was dismissed from power and imprisoned in the Novodevichi Convent, whereas her close associates were exiled or executed. After the death of Ivan Alekseevich (1696), Peter became an autocratic tsar (Fig. 1).

After his accession to the Russian throne, to improve his knowledge in the sciences and arts necessary for state reforms, Peter Alekseevich went on March 9, 1697, to foreign lands within the retinue of the Great Russian Embassy under the name of Peter Mikhailov, a subaltern officer of the Preobrazhensky Regiment. Having familiarized himself with European experience, on August 25, 1698, Peter I returned to Moscow.

Peter I implemented major reforms aimed at overcoming the backwardness of Russia compared to the advanced countries of Europe and the effective use of its huge human and natural resources. His transformations were a historically natural phenomenon because of the previous internal development of Russia and the complications of its international position. During this period, a fundamentally new era began in the history of Russian development. The reforming activity of Peter took place in an acrimonious struggle with the existing political and state machinery. Already the first, initially superficial, attempts at transformation caused dissatisfaction and resistance from the higher boyardom and clergy. The transformations influenced all aspects of public life; thus, a regular army and navy were created, a reform of the state administration system was performed, and industries, education, and science were created.

The first attempt to create a medical education system was made by Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich in the XVII century. In 1654, during a deadly plague epidemic that spread from Kazan to Chernigov and from Astrakhan to Novgorod, and the war with Poland, the first medical school was opened under the Aptekarsky Prikaz to train military doctors from archers, archer children, and various ranks of people. The school taught the basics of anatomy, physiology, surgery, therapy, pharmacology, "signs of sickness" (symptomatology), etc. Graduates became doctors in the regiments "for the treatment of military people." The educational process organization of the school had imperfections; however, when compared with later schools of the first third of the XVIII century, for example, the medical



**Fig. 1.** Peter the Great, Emperor of Russia. Painter J. P. Delaroche. Hamburg Art Gallery

**Рис. 1.** Петр I Великий, император России. Худ. П. Деларош. Художественная галерея Гамбурга

school of the Moscow hospital, no fundamental changes were observed for nearly a century; only the existing basic disciplines began to be taught by professors. Traditionally, the school, having trained more than a hundred healers, was closed. However, there are opinions that the school existed for more than half a century and served as a prototype of a hospital school in Moscow's Lefortovo [1–4].

At the beginning of the XVIII century, Russia was the only European country that had no universities or other higher educational or medical institutions (except for the Slavic-Greek-Latin Academy founded in 1687); thus, the creation of a national education system as one of the guarantors of national security remained a concern of Peter I.

Several doctors are required in the army, navy, and population as a whole. The problem of training doctors started to be solved in Russia in the XVIII century by creating hospital schools, which were the first higher medical schools in Russia, the likes of which did not exist in any country at that time. The first element in the reforms was the foundation of the Moscow hospital and the medical school under it, under the supervision of the ordinary physician, N.L. Bidloo. The decree of Peter I, signed on May 25, 1706, prescribed that "beyond the Yauza River opposite the German Quarter in a decent place ... a hospital must be build", where "sick patients can be treated and doctors can be trained". In the next year, 1707, according to the plan drawn up by Bidloo, a two-story wooden hospital building was constructed, overarched with an allegorical figure of Mercy [3, 5–9]. According to Chistovich, the archiaters did not attach any importance to this small hospital with a small school [5].

In hospital schools, the principles of education in European universities were completely abandoned, which retained medieval features, namely, book-verbal learning,

memorization of texts, and “disputes” on them. Having initially excluded the opposition of doctors to surgeons, Russian medical education was oriented on practice. The advanced universities of Europe achieved this by the end of the XVII century, when surgery became a prestigious field of medicine, and the requirements for teaching increased. The preparation of medicines was introduced into the duties of students in hospital schools. The “*matter medica*” was also taught in large volumes; this was a course that included pharmacognosy, pharmacology, pharmacy, and later botany. Classes in these disciplines were held in hospital wards and botanical gardens. Meanwhile, the problem of the development of medicine in the XVIII century remained systemic.

According to Zmeev, “In fairness, in comparison with the previous century, we can call the XVII century the heyday of our medical practice (with the Dutch); then throughout the XVIII century, it was at a freezing point (with the Germans). Compare the medical school of 1668 with Godzeny (pharmacist), Grammann (clinician), Balzir (surgeon), Gaden (anatomist), and the same medical faculty in Moscow in 1796 with Frese, Peken, Hildebrandt, and Mukhin (the same subjects) and not a man more” [10].

In 1702, after the siege, the Swedish fortress Noteburg (Schlüsselburg), to which Peter I attached great importance, was occupied by Russian troops. The assault and capture of the Nyenschanz fortress at the Okhta confluence with the Neva River on May 13, 1703, became the most important historical event for Russia. After the capture of the fortress, a meeting of the military council decided to build a new fortress downstream of the Neva from Nyenschantz, on the island of Lust-Elant (Veselay Island, Zayachiy Island). On May 27, 1703, “the fortress was founded and named St. Petersburg”; thus, Russia obtained access to the Baltic Sea. On November 5 (16), 1704, the Admiralty was founded in St. Petersburg, and its plan was drawn up by Peter I himself. It was a one-story П-shaped building, the courtyard was surrounded by an internal canal, and in the courtyard, there were boathouses for the construction of sailing ships. In the daily journal of the sovereign, it was written on this day: “The Admiralty House was laid, and we were in the tavern and had fun, the length was 200 sazhen (426 m), the width was 10 sazhen (21.3 m)” [11].

Bidloo, who was invited as a physician in ordinary to Peter I in 1702, wrote to Knyaz A.D. Menshikov on July 3, 1704:

“... I thought that it would be convenient to arrange such a hospital here, according to your Excellency. And if His Royal Majesty deigns to establish such a house here, then it would be a convenient place for that to be here on an island not far from the Meerova powder mill, which they say is now being sold or to the Sovereign” [12, 13].

The letter refers to a project for the construction of a hospital in St. Petersburg, on Vasilyevsky Island, or

in another area. War veterans with disability and those ineligible for military duty were sent to Novgorod, Moscow, and other places, whereas the rest were tried to be treated in St. Petersburg so they would return to duty.

In 1706, in the wooden barracks at the Admiralty in St. Petersburg, a naval hospital was organized under the supervision of the senior physician of the Baltic Fleet, J. Govi (approximately 1660–1743), about which he wrote in 1711 to Admiral General F.M. Apraksin:

“... from the past 706, I was taken by His Great Sovereign to serve in the navy as a senior healer and work at the fleet and other campaigns at the Main Hospital as a senior doctor and serve in the His Sovereign’s unit dutifully and desirably... and to this day... I have no command over myself, except for your Excellency.”

It can be assumed that later, with the commissioning of a new hospital complex on the Vyborg side, the Marine Hospital was transferred there. Architect D. Trezzini also wrote about the transfer of sick naval servants to a new stone building in his report in December 1723; however, where the patients were transferred from was not specified [12, 14].

In general, the period from 1706 to 1707 was rich in significant events for medicine and medical education, that is, a hospital with a medical school was established in Moscow, a hospital was created in the Admiralty, where there were medical students, and R.K. Erskine<sup>1</sup>, who became a faithful advocate of Peter’s ideas in matters of medicine and medical education, was appointed archiater and head of the Aptekarsky Prikaz.

During the Northern War, in addition to objective historical reasons, the constant shortage of medical personnel and the lack of necessary medical care significantly increased the loss of personnel assets of the Russian army and navy.

On August 2, 1710, Pankratiy Sumarokov, a scrivener with a key, was given a decree to stay permanently “for supervision and charity of various regiments with sick soldiers who were under the jurisdiction of Lieutenant Colonel Ostrovsky”. A “cruel fine” could be imposed for negligence [17]. P.I. Ostrovsky commanded a regiment of the St. Petersburg garrison and was a participant in military operations and a heroic defender of Kotlin Island.

The exact location of this hospital (infirmary) was not indicated in the document. In 1711, according to a traveler, on the Finnish side, where the right arm departs from the Neva, there were two large wooden hospitals for soldiers [18]. By 1720, the hospital already consisted of 18 hospital barracks, and in 1726, this military land hospital, located on the Malaya Neva (now Bolshaya Nevka) near the Karpovka River on St. Petersburg Island, was transferred by royal decree to the Vyborg side in a new hospital complex [19].

<sup>1</sup> Regarding R.K. Erskine, there are other opinions, and a more detailed analysis is presented in [15, 16].



On April 10, 1713, the senior physician J. Govi was given a nominal decree and an order from Count F.M. Apraksin:

"The senior physician of the Navy, Jan Govi, is in charge of the infirmary and the doctors who were now in charge of the infirmary at the Admiralty, namely Anthony Ravinel, Jan Lude [Lade], the apprentice Jan Volfov [Wolf] and medical students" [19].

Thus, in the Marine Hospital, the medical students of 1706 were preserved even on the eve of the establishment by Peter I of large general hospitals on the Vyborg side.

On January 24, 1715, Peter I issued a decree to the director of the Chancellery of City Affairs, Knyaz A.M. Cherkassky, about the construction of a special hospital complex on the Vyborg side of St. Petersburg "according to the drawing of Dr. Areskin" [14, 20, 21]. The tsar himself chose a place for construction not far from the Vyborg tract, along which troops marched during the Northern War. The project of the architect Dr. R.K. Erskine provided for the construction of a large hospital complex on the banks of the Neva, consisting of two halves and uniting the Admiralty and Military Land Hospitals in one place. Between the main buildings, located in one line along the Neva banks, was a single hospital church (sanctuary). This project, drawn up with the participation of Peter I, even then provided for the construction of an anatomical theater for each hospital for the training of medical students. Anatomical theaters in Europe began to spread a century earlier (since 1609, when the modern type of anatomy department at the University of Padua was first created); however, this innovation did not spread rapidly. Anatomical theaters, which are quite expensive, demonstrated the desire of universities to secure the status of centers of medical education [22]. Naturally, the organization in the hospital structure of an expensive educational unit, anatomical theater, could not be isolated from the task of training personnel.

In 1715, Peter I "ordered to fulfill his long-desired intention that these hospitals always have the most experienced and skillful doctors and healers" and that patients were transported there from regimental and naval hospitals so that they would be carefully cared for:

"so that each doctor had several assistant doctors, so that they would help him in the chambers of sick patients, and, moreover, they could learn more, so that, in addition to this, a certain number of young Russian students were constantly recruited, who, in addition to the Latin language, could also be trained in anatomy, in physiology, in medical operations and in the knowledge of medical supplies and their use, so that they can be, firstly, medical assistants, and then skillful doctors, and so that the Admiralty Board has the main supervision over the naval hospital, and the chief Krigskomisariat has the main supervision over land hospital".

The direct supervision of hospitals was entrusted to the "primary chiefs" of the Admiralty Board and the Krigskomisariat [14, 21, 23]. Even then, according to the plan of Peter I, hospitals on the Vyborg side not only

provided medical care to sick and wounded soldiers, but also became centers for the training of Russian medical personnel for the Russian army and navy.

Reports for 1716 were addressed to Peter I by Architect D. Trezzini, Governor-General of St. Petersburg, Knyaz A.D. Menshikov, and Knyaz A.M. Cherkassky, who testified to the construction of two-story half-timbered (mud-walled hut) buildings of the Admiralty, land hospitals on a stone foundation, and the beginning of construction of a common hospital church. The construction of hospitals was delayed, whereas the quality was far from perfect; thus, in 1719–1720, the buildings were dismantled, and their reconstruction started [19].

Peter was pressed for time. However, despite the urgent need to commission a new stone-built hospital, the construction of an enormous complex at that time dragged on for many years for various reasons and was not completed soon. The Admiralty Board also suffered from the lack of necessary conditions for the maintenance and treatment of sick and wounded patients, who huddled in the old wooden hospital and longed for the end of the long-term construction no less than the Military Board [19].

On May 3, 1718, Erskine submitted a report to the General Admiral and President of the Admiralty Board Count Fyodor Matveyevich Apraksin (1661–1728) for approval, where he presented his program ("opinion") in aspects on organizing the medical unit in the navy.

Paragraph No. 5 of the program read:

"For everyone who has come here, and future doctors in the service, three times every week at that place made by me, where all the most necessary sciences that the doctor must know, for those who know for the rule, and those who do not know for science, decrees will be taken and listened diligently" (resolution: "Correct [execute] upon receipt of the reasoning and confirmation of His Tsar's Majesty to His First Doctor").

In paragraph No. 6, the archiater asked F.M. Apraksin to send him medical students:

"Favour, Your Excellency, select a few young people from the academy who are skilled in Latin, who I will teach skillfully the medical practice according to my knowledge" (resolution: "They will be sent as many as necessary") [24].

All teachers invited to Russia were foreigners, and knowledge of the Latin language at that time was required, not only in medicine.

Having received positive resolutions on his proposals, R.K. Erskine proceeded with organizing a medical unit and medical schools at the General Hospitals of St. Petersburg. His death in December 1718 slowed down the implementation of Peter I's plans for the training of medical personnel in Russia. The death of the first Russian archiater was bereavement for the Great Sovereign, who paid his last respects to his adored doctor and colleague in the Alexander Nevski Monastery [15]. Ivan Lavrentievich Blumentrost, the new archiater, continued this work and

even drew up a project for the unification of hospital schools with a common regulation; however, for various reasons, these initiatives were not implemented.

On December 3, 1719, I.L. Blumentrost submitted his report (a program of 11 points) on the improvement of the medical service in the navy to the Admiral General and President of the Admiralty Board Count F.M. Apraksin. Point No. 9 was very important, in which the archiater reports on the following medical school in St. Petersburg:

"Because of His Majesty, I have permission to start the Medical School, which has already been initiated, and at the Admiralty Hospital, all surgeries are publicly demonstrated. And this year, at my request, by personalized decree of His Majesty, it was ordered to send 30 people as medical students from Moscow schools to replenish the fleet, of which 15 people have already been transferred" [24].

According to I.L. Blumentrost "Authority" dated September 16, 1719 "at the St. Petersburg Admiralty Hospital," there were "medical students Ivan Marisov, Peter Dolorie, Gerasim Novitskoy, and Zakhar Shtolvens." On July 15, 1719, by decree of Peter I, another 15 students were transferred from Moscow:

"namely, Fedor Kreinin, Semyon Muszakevich, Ivan Naumov, Kozma Shakovskiy, Andrey Galkovskiy, Ivan Bulatov, Mikhailo Mokeev, Fedor Kolychev, Ivan Fedotov, Pavel Kedrin, Dmitry Yerusolimov, Stepan Gorkanitskiy, Ivan Okolovich, Philip Shitsov, and Dmitry Khomutov." "And these students were organized in such a way that when the campaign returns from the sea, then these students must be constantly at the St. Petersburg Hospital to study medicine. And when in the spring, a sea campaign will be prepared, they will be allocated to ships" [24].

The French doctor, botanist, and traveler Pierre Deschisau, who visited Russia twice in 1724 and 1726, met with the sovereign's physician and the President of the Russian Academy of Sciences Lavrenty Lavrentievich Blumentrost (a younger brother of archiater I.L. Blumentrost) and other famous persons. In his description, P. Deschisau mentioned doctors A. Azzaretti, Vanderhulst, and V. Gorn, who taught anatomy and surgery in St. Petersburg hospitals [25].

Peter the Great did not live to see his plans come true. In December 1723, the eastern half of the hospital was "completed with a stone and other structure," and by decree of His Imperial Majesty, sick "naval servants" of the Admiralty Department were transferred there. However, the decrees of Peter I of December 13, 1723, and September 18, 1724, instructing D. Trezzini to describe in detail the completed half of the stone-built hospital, "to which the sick servants of the Admiralty Office have already been transferred" and to submit immediately an inventory of the buildings with his signature to the Chancellery, remained unanswered. On March 21, 1726, by decree of Empress Catherine I, the western half of the stone-built hospital was transferred to the "supervision and administration" of

the Military Collegium for further construction work. Now both collegiums, Military and Admiralty, had to be directly involved in the course of construction with the employment of their funds, artisans, workers, and soldiers [26].

When analyzing the "Regulations on the management of admiralties and shipyards and on the positions of the board of the admiralty and other all acquired ranks at the admiralty" (chapters 47–52)<sup>2</sup> and the "General Regulations on hospitals and on the positions of doctors appointed at them and other attendants of medical ranks,"<sup>3</sup> presented by A.V. Kostyuk, it was shown that despite the existence and operation of hospital schools, there were no approved staffs until 1722. Students were introduced to the staff of the naval hospital only by the charter of the Admiralty Board on December 3, 1732 [27–29].

Johann Christoph Rieger, the new archiater, who was the worst person of all the medical administrators of modern Russian history, according to the characteristics by Ya.A. Chistovich [5], noted in 1732 that the available staff of hospital schools was not approved. When mentioning the absence of medical archival documents of the first third of the XVIII century, the fire of 1737 is often referred to; however, based on the archiater's report, it can be assumed that there were schools and hospitals, but they were not approved. The hospital staff included 20 students. It is improbable that the figure is accidental because according to the revealed archival documents for the first third of the XVIII century, lists of hospital students included approximately 20–30 names. After the approval on January 9, 1733, of the staffs of hospital schools, prepared by the next archiater Johann Bernhard Fischer (Fig. 2), of the order of education in them on December 24, 1735, by the "General Regulations on Hospitals ..." for the next 65 years, the educational process and clinical base were improved, and the scientific component was developed [9, 30].

By 1735, all circumstances were favorable. N.L. Bidloo, who did not allow anyone except the emperor and the Holy Synod to control himself, entered into a tough and energetic discussion on this issue with archiater I.L. Blumentrost in 1721 [15, 31], and died. I.B. Fischer wrote in his report:

"Although in order to obtain a sufficient number of good doctors, a hospital has been established in Moscow for 30 years <...> I cannot understand why in all these years, only a few doctors from that mentioned hospital were produced... Here, at St. Petersburg General hospitals, although such good institutions were created in two years, in that time, from 20 students available in each hospital, already 8 people could become assistant doctors" [5].

The staff of hospital schools had already been approved by Anna Ioannovna, and the long-term hard-fought plan

<sup>2</sup> Complete collection of laws of the Russian empire (CCLRE). Vol. 6 (1720–1722). Law No. 3937, p. 525–637.

<sup>3</sup> CCLRE. Vol. 9 (1733–1736). Law No. 6852, p. 662–682.



**Fig. 2.** Archiater I.B. Fischer (1685–1772). Painter V. Tsaune. Museum of the History of Riga and Navigation

**Рис. 2.** Архиатр И.Б. Фишер (1685–1772). Худ. В. Цауне. Музей истории Риги и мореходства

for the organization of education was ready for approval. I.F. Schreiber taught major subjects in 1742–1760 at the surgical school of the General St. Petersburg Land Hospital and was the first to take the post of doctor-professor introduced at the initiative of P.Z. Kondoidi. I.F. Schreiber played an outstanding role in the fact that the medical schools at the St. Petersburg Land and Admiralty hospitals had equal rights to the university and transformed into the Main Medical School, then into the Medical-Surgical Academy, and later into the Military Medical Academy [32–34].

Immediately after the approval in 1735 of the staff and the procedure for training in surgical schools at the general St. Petersburg hospitals (Land and Admiralty), the search for ways to replenish the teaching staff was started. However, the training of medical doctors, who were allowed to engage in independent teaching activities, was possible only beyond Russia. The desire to provide the emerging system of medical education with teaching staff from among the “natural Russians” led the Medical Office to conduct a difficult search for candidates who needed to be trained in Europe for their needs. In 1741, the first three doctors (H. Minau, N. Ziold, and N. Nozhevshchikov) were sent to France for skill improvement, and upon their return, they taught at hospital schools<sup>4,5</sup>. The practice of referring Russian doctors to other countries at government expense to improve their special knowledge and obtain a doctoral degree existed before, but after that, it became regular [35–37].

On July 15, 1786, by decree of Catherine the Great, hospital schools were transformed into the Main Medical School and received the right to award a doctoral degree



**Fig. 3.** Count A.I. Vasiliev (1742–1807). Painter V.L. Borovikovskiy. Military Medical Museum

**Рис. 3.** Граф А.И. Васильев (1742–1807). Худ. В.Л. Боровиковский. Военно-медицинский музей

in medicine.<sup>6</sup> M.M. Terekhovskiy (botany, matter medica, and chemistry), N.K. Karpinsky (anatomy, physiology, and surgery), N.M. Maksimovich-Ambodik (midwifery), and P.M. Hoffmann (pathology, therapy, and medical practice) were the first professors appointed to the St. Petersburg Medical and Surgical School in 1786. They were the first tenured professors of the academy [38].

On August 17, 1795, Baron A.I. Vasiliev (Fig. 3) sought approval from Empress Catherine the Great “Preliminary Resolution on the positions of teachers and students of the Main Medical School.” Seven departments and the same number of professorships were established. An assistant professor was introduced, namely, an adjunct with a 5-year study period and “weekly rehearsals,” which were professor’s conversations with students [39]. In 1796, at hospitals for the first time in Russia, clinical chambers were established. On February 12 (13), 1799, the alma mater of military doctors received the status of academy<sup>7</sup>. Count A.I. Vasiliev became the key person who managed to complete the process of transforming Peter’s hospital schools into the Medical and Surgical Academy, which is symbolically reflected in his portrait by V.L. Borovikovskiy [40].

Discussions about the academy’s foundation date have been repeatedly raised. The first attempt to write about the history of the academy was made by Professor G.M. Prozorov [41]. At the end of the XIX century, numerous works have been performed to describe the history of the academy over 100 years [32, 42]. Separate works were conducted in the XX century [30]. A major problematic conference in 1984 was organized by Professor A.S. Georgievskiy, whose materials, including his article, are included in volume 216 of the Academy Proceedings [43]. A series of works were conducted at the end of

<sup>4</sup> CCLRE. SPb, 1830. Vol. 16, p. 795. Law No. 12179.

<sup>5</sup> CCLRE. SPb, 1830. Vol. 36, p. 37–42. Law No. 27646.

<sup>6</sup> CCLRE. SPb, 1830. Vol. 12, p. 632–634. Law No. 16412.

<sup>7</sup> CCLRE. SPb, 1830. Vol. 25 (1798–1799), p. 555–562. Law No. 18854.

the XX century, when the academy was included in the list of the objects of the cultural heritage of the people of the Russian Federation [44]. In the XXI century, starting with a discussion article and a major work of the Military Medical Museum [45–47], the discussion of the reasonable date for the academy foundation continued with a series of unique works with the introduction into scientific circulation of documents from the funds of the Russian state archives (the navy, ancient documents, historical, military, and some others) [12, 14, 19, 24, 26] and debatable works [21, 39, 48–50], which became an extensive discussion. In September 2019, at the initiative of the academy head, a commission was created that aimed to determine a reasonable date for the academy's founding. The permanent commission included honorary doctors of the academy: Academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS) B.V. Gaidar (1946–2021) [51, 52], RAS corresponding members V.O. Samoilov [53] and A.Ya. Fisun [54], Associate Professor O.L. Evlanov [55], Professor B.N. Kotiv [56], A.A. Budko, and Associate Professor D.V. Ovchinnikov. In continuation of research from 2021, according to the plan of military historical work of the Armed Forces of the Russian

Federation, with the participation of the Institute of Military History and the Military Medical Museum, the research work Jubilee-2023 is underway, which aimed to substantiate the date of the academy foundation.

The academy developed in stages. It was founded by the will of Peter I as a hospital with a hospital school; however, for the first two decades (1715–1733), during the war and construction, it existed only without approved staff and programs. Over the next 66 years (1733–1799), hospital schools grew and developed; hospitals became primary hospitals, and hospitals became the base for the practical training of doctors. The schools, first named an academy in February 1799, completed the stage of formation in 1801, having received a scientific component in the form of a system of state scientific certification. In 1808, the academy was recognized at the state level as “the first educational institution of the Empire.” Thus, the academy was created by Peter I by decree on January 24, 1715 the staff and educational process were regulated by decrees of Anna Ioannovna in 1733 and 1735; it was renamed the academy by decree of Paul I on February 12, 1799.

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