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NOTABLE NOTES

Mór Cohen, Better Known as Moriz Kaposi

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Today, Moriz Kaposi is remembered for the first description, in 1872, of the entity that bears his name,[1] but he was also one of the founders of the Viennese School of Dermatology.

Kaposi was born in 1837 in a poor Jewish family. The story of his name is curious: his first name is written "Moritz" in the records of the Jewish Community, but he almost always used "Moriz," and in some of his Hungarian publications he used "Moricz" and "Mór." The many versions of his first name simply reflected the multiple languages spoken by the educated classes in the Hapsburg monarchy. Originally his surname was Cohen, but, after his conversion to the Catholic faith, he changed it in 1871 to Kaposi, in reference to his birth town Kaposvár, in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It is still debated why he changed his surname; it is unlikely to have been due to the pressures of anti-Semitism because Kaposi was not an opportunist, and at that time he was well established in his career. According to his own words, Mór Cohen changed his surname to avoid confusion with 5 other physicians named similarly in the Vienna School of Medicine.[2]

In 1886 Kaposi married Martha Hebra, daughter of Ferdinand Ritter von Hebra who was his mentor and with whom he authored the book *Textbook of Skin Diseases* in 1878. Kaposi's main work, however, was *Pathology and Therapy of the Skin Diseases in Lectures for Practical Physicians and Students*, which became one of the most significant books in the history of dermatology and was translated into many languages. Kaposi's remarkable skill with languages stood him in good stead; he was fluent in Hungarian, German, and French. In addition, he was versed in English and of course Latin, the official language of the Empire.[3]

While Hebra is considered the "father of dermatology," Kaposi was one of the first to establish dermatology on its anatomical pathology scientific basis. In his field, Kaposi concerned himself chiefly with syphilis, its clinical presentation, its etiology, and treatment. He wrote with Hebra some of the early descriptions of cutaneous lupus erythematosus and noted the systemic involvement in 1872, and in 1875 he described the rash as "butterfly." Kaposi used his skills of observation and description to first report and delineate many other entities, such as xeroderma pigmentosum, diabetic and leukemic skin changes, syringoma, gangrenous zoster or eczema herpeticum, and pustulosis varioliformis acuta, which later became known as *Kaposi varicelliform eruption* or *eczema herpeticatum*.

Kaposi died peacefully in his sleep in Vienna at only 65 years of age.

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