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Prevention and rehabilitation in Middle Ages

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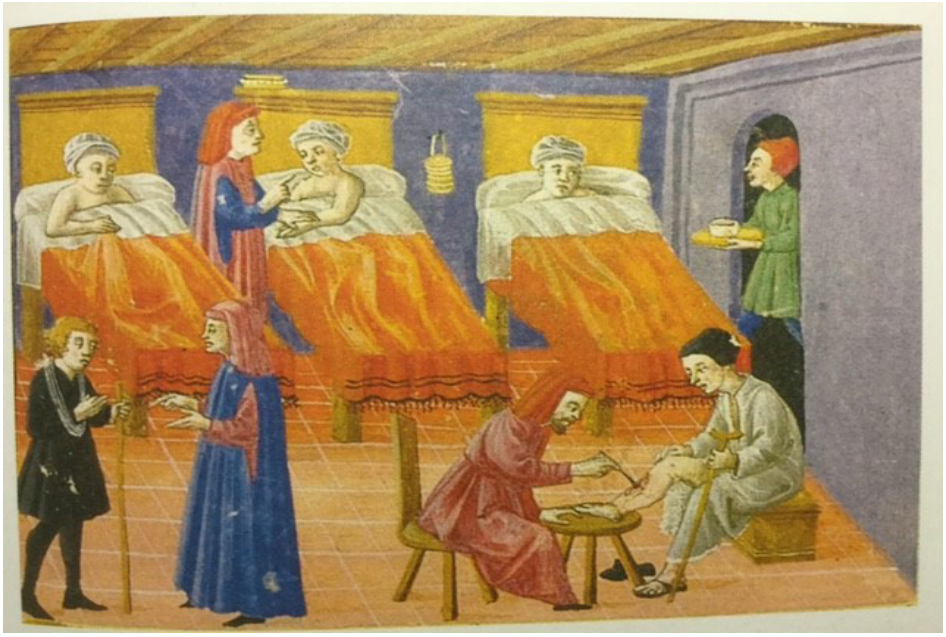
Italian hospitals in the late Middle Ages already offered much more than a simple reception and care. In a work that can be consulted in the Laurentian Library in Florence, datable about 1300, painter Gaddi shows a series of hospitalized people. Already the representation is not very sad perhaps due to the lack of modern white walls and patients appear regularly placed in beds with acts of assistance and care. The two couples in the foreground completely decline an idea of health that we moderns tend to, even though we have not yet reached it. In fact, therapy is combined with education and prevention. The disease in question is a chronic vascular sore, a subject not resolved at by us moderns and a source of great health care costs. One of the reasons for these costs is to be fund in the lack of attention of moderns to preventive and educational activities. In the foreground on the right the therapeutic act is portrayed, in which it is evident a doctor performing a cleaning, disinfection and dressing of a vascular sore. But the great news that is incredible in the so – called dark ages, is portrayed on the left. The doctor, recognizable by the red headdress, gives a stick, that is a device to improve, encourage and facilitate the ambulatory exercise by his patient. We also note that he spends time on an explanation to the patient who is portrayed as he listens to medical advice with interest. The rehabilitation intentions are proven by the fact the patient wears a rudimentary orthopaedic brace which surrounds widely the neck. The device allows the patient to walk keeping the arm hanging from the neck, unable to move perhaps following a trauma. In the hospitals of the Middle Ages, therefore, education and adapted motor activity were carried out which, today, together with food, is considered the basis of disease prevention.



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