

Texts and Documents

PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY VENICE

by

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THE RELATIONSHIP between physicians and surgeons was of fundamental concern to the medical profession in the sixteenth century as in other periods. The superior position enjoyed by the physicians has long been recognized. It was they who controlled medical education in the universities, and, to a considerable extent, medical practice in the towns. Their training, which in Italy included up to eight years' university education in arts and medicine, far exceeded that of the surgeons, and was more academically based. The salaries of physicians hired by communities for public service were greater than those paid to surgeons, and similarly in the universities chairs of medicine commanded higher salaries than chairs of surgery. But in delineating the relationship between the two branches of the profession, historians have often gone beyond these general truths. The physician has sometimes emerged as almost an academic philosopher, drawn from the upper class and scarcely deigning to take the pulse of his patients. The surgeon on the other hand has been caricatured as ill-educated, with little or no Latin, and hardly differentiated from the ranks of the barbers. This tradition has recently been maintained in certain respects in an important essay on the medical profession in Galileo's Tuscany. In it, Professor Cipolla contrasts the university training of the physicians with the practical apprenticeship of the surgeons, whom he describes as "definitely lower class and for all practical purposes just ordinary craftsmen".¹ The documents printed below do not support this view, at least in respect of sixteenth-century Venice. Rather, they confirm the opinion of C. D. O'Malley that the contrast between physicians and surgeons has been overstated on the basis of conflicts in London and Paris.²

Zuan Francesco Strata, from the island of Burano in the Venetian lagoon, had a successful career in Venice as a surgeon. He served several times in the Venetian fleet as surgeon to the *Capitano General da Mar*, and on the third occasion, in 1538, his salary was raised from the normal ten ducats to twelve ducats per month, since he was leaving behind a flourishing practice.³ He was a member of the Venetian College of Surgeons, and served at least seven annual terms as its chief officer, or

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¹ Carlo M. Cipolla, *Public health and the medical profession in the Renaissance*, Cambridge University Press, 1976, pp. 75-76.

² C. D. O'Malley (editor), *The history of medical education*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, University of California Press, 1970, p. 100.

³ Archivio di Stato di Venezia, *Provveditori alla Sanità*, Registro 12, ff. 87r-v, 90r.

Prior, between 1542 and his death in 1575.⁴ The proceedings of the College, which are recorded in Latin and in his own hand during his terms as Prior, indicate that he had a degree in surgery.⁵ They also suggest that he came from a medical family, possibly of Pavian origin.⁶

On 3 April 1557 Zuan Francesco was appointed by the Venetian Senate as doctor to the city's Health Office, the primary function of which was the control of plague. The Office maintained two doctors on a permanent basis. The first was responsible for the medical care of patients in the lazarettos, especially the treatment of plague cases in the Lazaretto Vecchio. The second, the *medico per la terra*, was mainly concerned with identifying cases of plague in the city. Central to the defence of Venice from plague was the early identification of any outbreak of the disease in the city. For this purpose the Office recorded all deaths in Venice, noting symptoms of the deceased persons and the length of their illnesses. In suspicious cases the *medico per la terra* was sent to investigate. It was to this post that Zuan Francesco was appointed. According to the Senate motion for his appointment, he was to examine the bodies of the sick and the dead as they occurred from day to day in time of health and in time of plague, checking for plague symptoms so that appropriate and speedy action could be taken in case of necessity.⁷ Zuan Francesco was appointed towards the end of a minor epidemic which troubled Venice between 1555 and 1558.⁸ Thereafter the city suffered no further outbreak of plague until 1575, the year of his death. In the meantime the two Health Office doctors reported for duty daily at the Office, but probably this did not exclude a concurrent private practice. It may have been whilst serving as *medico per la terra* that Zuan Francesco held the contract as surgeon to the great Venetian foundling hospital, the Pietà, which is mentioned below.

The success of his surgical practice allowed Zuan Francesco to send his son Zuan Giacomo Strata, whom he had already trained in surgery, to Padua for the long education necessary to become a physician. Some years after Zuan Giacomo's education was completed, his father presented the first of two petitions to the Doge, asking permission for his son to share his duties and to succeed him on his death as doctor to the Health Office. The petition was supported by the *Provveditori alla Sanità*, the magistrates responsible for the Office, in a statement made in January 1561.⁹ Taking

Zuan Francesco was reported dead on 16 December 1575, when his successor at the Health Office was appointed, *ibid.*, Registro 732, f.82r.

The proceedings from 1478 to 1628 survive in the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice, as *MSS. Italiani*, Classe VII, Codici 2328–2329 (=9722–9723). His degree was from the Venetian College of Physicians.

⁴ Agostin Maria Strata, who is also recorded as a member of the College during the 1540s, took a doctorate in surgery at Padua in 1517, when he was described as “Augustinus Maria de Strata Papiensis, habitator Burani”, E. M. Forin (editor), *Acta graduum academicorum ab anno 1501 ad annum 1525*, Padua, Istituto per la Storia dell' Università di Padova, 1969, p. 264.

⁷ Archivio di Stato di Venezia, *Provveditori alla Sanità*, Registro 13, ff.15v–16r.

⁸ His work in the epidemic is referred to in the Health Office records (*ibid.*, Registro 730, ff.164v, 218v–219v), and in the letter book of another doctor employed during the epidemic, Ludovico Cucino (Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, MS.223, f.94).

⁹ Archivio di Stato di Venezia, *Provveditori alla Sanità*, Registro 730, f.297r–v (18 January 1560, Venetian style).

advice from the officers (*Priori et Consiglieri*) of the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons, they learned that Zuan Giacomo had studied for many years at Padua under the distinguished Venetian humanist physician Vettor Trincavella, who held the principal chair of practical medicine,¹⁰ and the anatomist Gabrielle Falloppia, who held the chair of surgery and anatomy together with that of medicinal simples, before returning home to take his degree in arts and medicine in the Venetian College of Physicians.¹¹ This first appeal evidently did not bear fruit, for in 1563 Zuan Francesco addressed a second petition to the Doge. This was dealt with on 8 November by the Ducal Council (*Minor Consiglio*), which resolved that the *Provveditori alla Sanità* should produce an advisory report. Accordingly, the *Provveditori* proceeded to take statements on the competence of Zuan Giacomo from seven Venetian physicians chosen by lot. Amongst them were the anatomist Niccolò Massa, his nephew Appolonio Massa, several times Prior of the Venetian College of Physicians, and Niccolò Sanmichele (also known as Niccolò Comasco), anatomist, cosmographer, and botanist. On the basis of their statements, the *Provveditori* supported Zuan Francesco's petition in their report dated 23 November.¹² On 28 December the matter came before the Senate, which decided in Zuan Francesco's favour, and its decision was announced in the name of Doge Girolamo Priuli on the following day.¹³

Printed below are the texts of this second petition, the statements of the seven physicians, and the motion placed before the Senate. They are of interest not in the context of Zuan Giacomo's subsequent career—for he does not afterwards appear in the Health Office records and did not succeed his father in office in 1575—but for what they reveal about the functions of Health Office doctors and the roles of physicians and surgeons.

Zuan Francesco Strata was a member of the Venetian College of Surgeons, which, like the city's College of Physicians, had been in existence since the fourteenth century.¹⁴ He could not be termed a barber surgeon, for the College was quite distinct from the guild of barbers. Furthermore, he held a doctorate in surgery, a qualification granted by Bologna, Pavia, Padua, and other Italian universities from medieval times to candidates with practical experience, and also several years' university education in the subject. The statutes of the University of Pisa of 1478 required two years of university education in surgery plus one year of practical experience for the surgical degree, indicating that an academic training was available for Tuscan surgeons at least at that date, and precisely the same requirements were laid down in the statutes

¹⁰ Trincavella (d. 1563) was famous for his translations and editions of classical texts as well as for his own writings. A biographical sketch is included in his *Opera Omnia*, 3 vols., Venice, 1599.

¹¹ It was common for physicians to study at Padua but to take their degrees elsewhere. Trincavella, as a member of the Venetian College, provided a strong link between Venice and the University at Padua. He is said to have presented no less than 150 candidates for doctorates in Venice between 1540 and 1561, amongst them Zuan Giacomo Strata. Padua, Biblioteca Universitaria, MS.318, f.57r *et seq.* (Notes on Trincavella from the archives of the Venetian College of Physicians.)

¹² Archivio di Stato di Venezia, *Provveditori alla Sanità*, Registro 13, f.70r–v.

¹³ *Ibid.*, Registro 2, f.138r (29 December 1563).

¹⁴ The published works on the College are Francesco Bernardi, *Prospetto storico-critico . . . del Collegio Medico-Chirurgico e dell'arte chirurgica in Venezia*, Venice, 1797; and Davide Giordano, 'Venezia ne'suoi chirurghi. Il collegio iatro-chirurgico', in his *Scritti e discorsi pertinenti alla storia della medicina*, Milan, Rivista di Terapia Moderna, 1930, pp. 59–93.

of the College of Arts and Medicine of Padua as revised in 1607.¹⁵ The membership of the Venetian College of Surgeons was only about one-third the size of the city's College of Physicians. In February 1547 there were twenty-seven members, an unusually high figure, including fifteen doctors of surgery, three doctors of medicine, and seven without doctorates but who had been licensed to practise by a joint examination board of the chief officers of the city's Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons following an examination in Latin on surgical texts.¹⁶ Particularly interesting is the presence of the doctors of medicine, amongst them Niccolò Sanmichele (d. 1578), whose testimonial for Zuan Giacomo Strata is printed below. He was a member of the College of Surgeons for most of his career, only moving to the College of Physicians in 1573.¹⁷ Whilst a student at Padua in 1528 he had held the lectureship on Avicenna, and many years later it was through his aid that Andrea Graziolo of Salò gained access to the manuscript of Ramnusio's Arabic text and translation of the Canon.¹⁸ Sanmichele took his doctorate in Venice in 1530, and served in 1539 as physician to the *Capitano General da Mar* in the fleet.¹⁹ Luigi Anguillara, who was in charge of the botanical garden at Padua, mentioned his botanical research and field work in Greece and Crete, and described him as a great anatomist, cosmographer, astrologer, and medicinal botanist (*semplicista*). Fabricius is also said to have commended his anatomical work.²⁰ His membership of the College of Surgeons was clearly no reflexion of any lack of standing as a physician. Indeed, in the plague of 1575–77, which caused more than 50,000 deaths in Venice, he was one of two physicians withdrawn from service to the sick in the parishes on the grounds of the particular importance of his life. Thereafter his attentions were to be reserved for nobles, citizens, and persons of quality, and he proved to be one of the few physicians to whom the Health Office regularly looked for advice.²¹ Sanmichele was not unique in being a member, at separate times, of each of the Colleges. In a few instances a physician serving as Prior of the College of Surgeons even went on to become Prior of the College of Physicians. Paolo Littegato, for instance, who graduated in arts and medicine in Padua in 1576, was elected to these offices respectively in 1586 and 1599, having moved from one College to the other in 1591.²²

¹⁵ Angelo Fabroni, *Historiae Academiae Pisanae*, 2 vols. Pisa, 1791–92; reprinted Bologna, 1971, pp. 460–461. Museo Civico Correr, Venice, *Cicogna MSS.*, Numero 1243, f.55v. (A copy of the College statutes of 1607.)

¹⁶ The qualification of the twenty-seventh member is not stated, but he later served as a physician in the Venetian fleet. Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice, *MSS. Italiani*, Classe VII, Codice 2328 (=9722), 1 February 1546 Venetian style; *ibid.*, Codice 2329 (=9723), 6 May 1558.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Codice 2342 (=9695), f.15r. (Notes from the archives of the Venetian College of Physicians.)

¹⁸ Bartolo Bertolaso, 'Ricerche d'archivio su alcuni aspetti dell'insegnamento medico presso la Università di Padova nel cinque e seicento', *Acta Medicae Historiae Patavina*, 1959–60, 6: 33. Andrea Graziolo di Salò, *Principis Avicennae liber primus*, Venice, 1580.

¹⁹ Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice, *MSS. Italiani*, Classe VII, Codice 2379 (=9686), f.14v (a note of his degree). Archivio di Stato di Venezia, *Provveditori alla Sanità*, Registro 12, f.93r.

²⁰ Luigi Anguillara, *Semplici*, Venice, 1561, pp. 19, 88, 274, 298. Antoine Portal, *Histoire de l'anatomie et de la chirurgie*, 6 vols., Paris, 1770–73, vol. 2, p. 159.

²¹ Archivio di Stato di Venezia, *Secreta, Materie Miste Notabili*, Registro 95, f.65r (6 August 1576). A full account of measures taken during the plague, by Cornelio Morello, Secretary of the Health Office.

²² Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice, *MSS. Italiani*, Classe VII, Codici 2329 (=9723), ff.58r;

Physicians who practised surgery did not necessarily join the College of Surgeons. Members of the Italian Colleges of Physicians were, as such, entitled to practise surgery. The fourteenth-century statutes of the College of Bologna had made provision for this, and so did the statutes of the Venetian College approved in 1507. The latter in fact boasted explicitly that there were always experts in surgery amongst its members.²³ Alongside Zuan Giacomo Strata in the Venetian College of Physicians, were Niccolò Massa, who had taken a doctorate in surgery in 1515 before proceeding to a doctorate in medicine in 1521, and Appollonio Massa, who took a doctorate in surgery in 1538 prior to his studies with Auerbach and Melanchthon.²⁴

Whilst, however, physicians were free to practise surgery, surgeons could by no means practise medicine. This was forbidden by College statutes and by civic law. Giacomo de Musis, for instance, a member of the Venetian College of Surgeons who took a doctorate in surgery at Padua in 1543, was exiled from Venice for eighteen months in 1546 for failing to call in a physician in the case of a noblewoman who died under his care.²⁵ Yet the documents which follow suggest that even to this rule there were exceptions. Of the doctors employed by the Health Office, the *medico per la terra* was usually a physician, or, as in the case of Piero di Castello who held the post from 1544 to 1554, a doctor of both surgery and physic. The appointment of Zuan Francesco Strata, which was unusual, meant that a surgeon was charged with the primary functions of diagnosing diseases and prescribing medicines, and occasionally involved in other aspects of the work of the Office, as in 1559 when he drew up a report on the drugs dispensed by Giacomo Coppa of Modena. The doctors employed in the lazarettos on the other hand were normally surgeons, since the treatment of plague cases, which might involve the lancing of bubonic swellings, was considered as primarily a surgical operation. Even so, they prescribed drugs lavishly, and one of them, Niccolò Collochio, who served from 1528 to 1553, even developed a secret plague remedy which was to gain a fortune and a reputation throughout Northern Italy for his son-in-law Ascanio Olivieri, who served the lazarettos from 1567 to the end of the century.

A valuable perspective on the medical profession comes from the small town of Feltre to the north of Venice. For the care of its citizens the town employed not only a physician but also, at least from 1520, a graduate surgeon. The Venetian College of Surgeons was a principal source from which candidates could be drawn, and between 1538 and 1562 the post was held successively by three members of the College, including the surgical author and teacher Giovanni Andrea dalla Croce. In the records of Feltre these graduate surgeons were sometimes referred to as *chirurghi maggiori*, but more often as *chirurghi fisici*. In 1580, for financial reasons, the community could no longer afford a graduate surgeon (referred to at this time as *persona che habbi grado de fisico e ciroico*). Instead, it appointed a Venetian barber-

68r: 2379 (=9686), f.2v. Paulo Litteгато was a relative (*nepos*) of Francesco Litteгато de Lendinara, who was many times Prior of the Venetian College of Surgeons, and who took part in anatomical teaching at Padua both before and after Vesalius held the chair.

²³ Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice, *MSS. Italiani*, Classe VII, Codice 2369 (=9667), f.17v.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, Codice 2379 (=9686), f.13v; Codice 2342 (=9695), f.54r.

²⁵ Archivio di Stato di Venezia, *Provveditori alla Sanità*, Registro 729, f.113v.

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surgeon (*barbiere ciroico*) who had trained under dalla Croce.²⁶

The Feltre records thus reflect the position of the collegiate surgeons of Venice as a professional élite, distinct from the guild of barber-surgeons and in some respects closer to the physicians. On this basis, although there were rivalries and disputes between their Colleges, Venetian physicians and surgeons co-operated freely—at the bedsides of their patients, in the annual anatomies, and in licensing surgeons without degrees. What emerges from the documents which follow is the close relationship of physicians and surgeons in daily medical practice in Venice, and the high regard which one doctor was able to earn not only for his knowledge as a physician, but also for his skill in surgery.

Most Serene Prince,

I, Gio. Francesco da Burano, doctor of surgery, was appointed doctor to the Health Office of Your Serenity on 3 April 1557. My duties were to serve the Office in time of health and in time of suspicion [of plague], visiting infected places, examining corpses, giving remedial and preservative medicines to the sick and the suspect in this city and throughout the Dogado, and carrying out all those tasks which were amply set out in the motion for my appointment. My salary is one hundred and fifty ducats per annum for life, with no allowances for the expenses of a boat or anything else.

I have fulfilled these responsibilities up to the present time with promptitude and with all the concern and diligence appropriate in a man who wishes to practise this profession worthily. I attend every day at the Office of the Illustrious Provveditori as I am obliged to do under the terms of my appointment. But my age, (already an advanced one), increases day by day, and I have a son, Gio. Giacomo, whom I have brought up in my profession, and who took a doctorate in arts and medicine in 1558. Through his scholarship (*dotrina*), and from what he has learned at my hands and those of other distinguished men, he is as good a surgeon as myself or any other in this city.

I appeal to Your Serenity to allow me to have him as a partner in my duties, on the understanding that in addition to my own efforts, (which I do not intend in any way to lay aside), he too should attend to all to my obligations, together with me or separately according to need, without however taking any reward or payment from Your Serenity, save only a declaration that after my death he should succeed in my place with the same duties and salary assigned to me in the motion for my appointment.

In doing this, Your Serenity will have two doctors in place of one, and on my death you will not be without a doctor, and will be sure to have a most loyal and experienced man for the needs (from which God preserve us) of this city and its large population. He will not be a charge to the public or the private purse, and will not fail to give the faithful and kindly care which on these occasions is appropriate and necessary. And in recompense for my long service both in this city and outside it with the distinguished Generali and other representatives of this most serene dominion, I shall have the contentment of seeing my posterity embraced after my death by Your

²⁶ Mario Gaggia, 'Medici e chirurghi della comunità di Feltre dal secolo XVI al XIX', *Archivio Storico di Belluno, Feltre e Cadore*, 1940, 12: 1181–1185, 1197–1201, 1215–1220, 1232–1237.

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Serenity, whom I esteem above all else and to whom on bended knee I recommend myself.

(Archivio di Stato di Venezia, *Provveditori alla Sanità*, Registro 13, ff.69r–70r.)

13 November 1563

On the instructions of the illustrious Signori Provveditori alla Sanità, Nicolò S. Michiel Comasco, doctor of physic, was summoned to their Office. The above petition being read to him, he made the following statement on oath:

“In my judgment Io. Iacomo, the son of Z. Francesco Strata da Burano, is suitable for a post such as that named in the petition. I know this because on many occasions I have spoken, reasoned and formed a college (*collegiato*) with him.²⁷ I have found him suitable and fully sufficient in our art, and on my conscience I declare that in this matter of public health he is as adequate as his father, and even more so.”

This he affirmed on oath and with his signature as follows: I, Nicolaus S. Michaelis of Como, physician, affirm the above on oath.

14 November 1563

On instructions as above, the aforesaid petition was read to Francesco Marino, the son of Alberto, doctor of physic.²⁸ On oath he replied as follows:

“I have practised with Io. Giacomo the son of Z. Francesco da Burano in many cases. I have found him sufficient both in theoretical and practical medicine, and especially in the case of a lady with pestilential fever who developed two swellings (*aposteme*) behind the ears.²⁹ The swellings and fever were treated by him alone, although many surgeons might have been required. This lady lived and was freed of this illness, and in her cure Z. Giacomo’s treatment was excellent both with regard to the fever and the swellings. And indeed since there was pestilential fever there was the greatest danger that the case might prove fatal. And if the Signori would like to meet this lady, I will make her known. And I conclude that he is sufficient and highly suitable for such employment, because indeed if his father is sufficient through practice, Z. Giacomo is sufficient through practice and theory as well.”

And this he affirmed on oath.

I, Franciscus Marino, affirm the above.

14 November 1563

On instructions as above, the aforesaid petition was read to Aurelius Fontana, doctor of physic.³⁰ On oath he replied as follows:

“Z. Giacomo, the son of Z. Francesco da Burano, is so learned and sufficient in his profession, both as a physician and as a surgeon, that I am certain that few young

²⁷ That is, shared and discussed a case with him.

²⁸ Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice, *MSS. Italiani*, Classe VII, Codici 2342 (=9695); 2379 (=9686). (Transcripts and notes from the records of the Venetian College of Physicians.) Aurelio Fontana joined the College in 1527. Francesco Marino and Girolamo Gratarolo were elected as Priors respectively in 1530 and 1545.

²⁹ The word *apostema* was sometimes applied to bubonic swellings, and this testimonial may be meant to suggest that Zuan Giacomo was familiar with plague.

³⁰ See note 28 above.

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men of his age or older can be superior to him. I have found this both in the disputations often held in our College in which he has often demonstrated his scholarship, and also in practice. On several occasions I have participated with Z. Giacomo in his cases, and he has handled them as an expert and practised doctor, so that in most instances, through his diligence and good care, the outcome has been a most happy one.”

And this I affirm on oath.

I, Aurelius Fontana, doctor of physic, affirm the above.

15 November 1563

On instructions the aforesaid petition was read to Nicolaus Massa, doctor of physic, the son of Appollonio, in his home in the parish of S. Giovanni Nuovo.³¹ He replied on oath:

“I have known and recognize Z. Giacomo, the son of Z. Francesco da Burano, now a doctor in the art of medicine, as a man of worth. He is learned and has a very good understanding of philosophy and also medicine—both physic and surgery. Many times I have been present during his visits and been called in to supervise. I have found him most worthy, for I have seen that he proceeds correctly (*canonicamente*), and his work has proved successful, both in physic and surgery. And this year when the anatomy was held, finding myself with him and discussing the anatomy, I saw and heard that Z. Giacomo has a very good understanding of these matters. So that I believe he is a man of ability, who can treat and recognize all types of illness, both in physic and surgery. I think that he will improve day by day and, in my view, will become a man of rare distinction among doctors.”

And this I affirm on oath.

I, the aforesaid Nicolaus Massa, affirm the above.

15 November 1563

The aforesaid petition being read to Apolonius Massa, doctor of physic, he replied on oath as follows:

“I know that Z. Giacomo Strata, the son of Z. Francesco da Burano took his doctorate in arts and medicine in our College in Venice in such a way that he was approved as suitable and sufficient by the entire College, having all the votes in his favour without any dissent. Before that time his competence showed him to be a man of distinction, and this is also apparent at the present time for he adds physic to the manual skills, that is, surgery, for which he is renowned (*accompagnando con l'arte phisical la operation manual cioè la chierusia la qual in lui è notissima*). And this especially because he has observed anatomies and also with his own hands has practised (*esercitato*) privately with other doctors. So that in my view the aforesaid Z. Giacomo is excellent in the art of medicine, with few equals in our time.”

And this I affirm on oath.

I, Apolonius Massa, doctor of arts and medicine, affirm the above on oath.

³¹ The principal study of Niccolò Massa, which also has biographical details of Appollonio Massa, is contained in L. R. Lind (editor), *Studies in pre-Vesalian anatomy*, Philadelphia, American Philosophical Society, 1975. Appollonio was Prior of the College of Physicians from 1549 to 1551. Niccolò served as *Consigliere*, but was never elected Prior.

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15 November 1563

On instructions as above, the aforesaid petition was read to Hieronimus Gratarolus, doctor of physic, who replied on oath as follows:

“I know Z. Giacomo Strata, son of the excellent doctor of surgery Z. Francesco Strata, who took his doctorate in our College of Physicians. We know him to be a most learned man, and this because on many occasions we have heard him dispute and reason in our College. Furthermore, when Z. Francesco his father was ill, Z. Giacomo took his place at the Ospedale della Pietà in the cases of those boys and girls who needed surgery, and in these treatments he proved successful. And I was present in these cases as physician.”

And this I affirm on oath.

I, Hieronimus Gratarolus, affirm as above.

15 November 1563

The aforesaid petition being read to Michael a Mutis, doctor of physic, he replied on oath as follows:

“I know the aforesaid Z. Giacomo, son of Z. Francesco da Buran, who took his doctorate with distinction in our College. He has often disputed and reasoned with the young men taking their doctorates, and has shown a perfect knowledge of medicine. In addition I was involved in a surgical case in which the aforesaid Z. Giacomo also participated. He gave his opinion on that case and it developed as he said it would, so that for his age he is a perfect doctor and surgeon and if he practises as I believe he will, he cannot fail to go on to a perfect conclusion. In my judgment not only is he a learned man, but also an excellent judge in business affairs (*in agilibus mundi*), which is useful in all professions.”

And this I affirm on oath.

I, Michiel de Mutti, physician, affirm as above.

(Archivio di Stato di Venezia, *Provveditori alla Sanità*, Registro 13, ff.71r–73r.)

28 December 1563 *In the Senate*

Z. Giacomo Strata, doctor of arts and medicine, (the son of Z. Francesco Buran, doctor of surgery and doctor of our Health Office), is so sufficient, learned and experienced in medicine, (and especially in surgery which he has practised now for many years with Z. Francesco Buran his father), that it will be the greatest convenience for the affairs of our Health Office, and of benefit to the whole city, to employ him as doctor to the Office—in which capacity his father is at present employed to the advantage and satisfaction of all. And this especially because, as this Council has heard from the documents which have just been read, he is to fulfil, in conjunction with his father, all those duties which his father is bound to carry out both in time of plague and at other times.

Therefore the motion will be put that the aforesaid doctor Z. Giacomo Strata should practise as doctor to the Health Office together with his father Z. Francesco during the latter's lifetime, and thereafter succeed to his post with the same emoluments, salary, and duties which his father has at present.

(Archivio di Stato di Venezia, *Provveditori alla Sanità*, Registro 13, ff.68v–69r.)

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SUMMARY

The example of Venice shows that the divisions between physicians and surgeons have been exaggerated. Members of the Venetian College of Surgeons were better educated and more highly respected than has generally been acknowledged, forming a distinct élite between the guild of barber-surgeons and the College of Physicians. Physicians did not shrink from practising surgery both as members of the College of Surgeons and as members of the College of Physicians. The documents printed here relate to a petition made in 1563 by Zuan Francesco Strata, a graduate in surgery and doctor to the Venetian Health Office, in which he sought permission to share his post at the Health Office with his son Zuan Giacomo, a doctor of arts and medicine. These documents, which include the testimonials of Niccolò Massa and six other physicians on the suitability of Zuan Giacomo, reflect the close connexion between the two branches of the profession in daily medical practice in Venice.