

Insatiable Hunger: A Court Physician's Account of Dog-Hunger in the Seventeenth Century

Tunahan Durmaz

Author:

Ph.D. Candidate, European University Institute, Florence
Fellow, Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations (ANAMED), Koç University, Istanbul
Tunahan.Durmaz@eui.eu
ORCID: [0000-0002-0363-4506](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0363-4506)

Keywords:

Ottoman medicine, Sakızlı İsa Efendi, History of eating disorders, Dog-hunger, 17th Century

Cite this article:

Durmaz, Tunahan. "Insatiable Hunger: A Court Physician's Account of Dog-Hunger in the Seventeenth Century"
Keshif: E-Journal for Ottoman-Turkish Micro Editions 3/2 (Special Issue 2025): 10-20.
Available under <https://doi.org/10.25365/kshf-25-02-02>.

Article DOI [10.25365/kshf-25-02-02](https://doi.org/10.25365/kshf-25-02-02)

Published online July 07, 2025

© 2025 Tunahan Durmaz, published by *Keshif: E-Journal for Ottoman-Turkish Micro Editions*.

This is an Open Access article licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0. International License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Context¹

The account of dog-hunger² (*cū 'u'l-kelb*) presented here is found in *Devā'ü'l-Emrāz*.³ *Devā'* was compiled in the 1640s by Sakızlı İsa Efendi, the chief physician (*hekimbaşı*) at the court of Sultan Ibrahim.⁴ Encyclopedic in nature, the work elaborates on approximately four hundred illnesses and disease states from pathological and therapeutic perspectives. Despite being largely neglected in the historiography of Ottoman medicine, *Devā'* presents a wealth of information that provokes numerous thoughts and questions pertaining to meanings, categories, and regimes of disease in early modern Istanbul. Sakızlı İsa Efendi's interest in disease nomenclature, symptomatology, and etiology not only lends us a perspective into a physician's mindset but also allows us to consider disease and illness in its social and cultural contexts.

Dog-hunger (*cū 'u'l-kelb*) is one of the ailments detailed in the source.⁵ It is described as an eating disorder characterized by an insatiable hunger, eventually leading to a vicious cycle of food-binging and discharge of undigested food. Dog-hunger was first mentioned by Galen of Pergamon and was thus known to generations of physicians over the centuries.⁶ It also appeared in the Ottoman medical writings from an early

¹ One chapter of my forthcoming dissertation on the perceptions of illness in late-seventeenth-century Ottoman Istanbul examines in detail the medicalization of hunger and appetite in the contemporary Ottoman medical compendia, with a particular focus on İsa Efendi's *Devā'ü'l-Emrāz*. —I would like to thank Sümeyye Hoşgör-Büke and Deniz Özeren for inviting me to contribute to the volume, and Nükhet Varlık and Deren Ertaş for their feedback. My thanks are also due to the *Keshif* editors and the anonymous reviewer for their careful reading of the transcription and their corrections.

² The term dog-hunger is the most accurate translation for *cū 'u'l-kelb* on two grounds: (1) It provides a word-for-word translation. (2) Dog-hunger was a historically-available term in the English language whose first use draws back to the early 1600s. See, "Dog-Hunger," in *Oxford English Dictionary*, December 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/9332899614>.

³ The copy used here is Kütahya Zeytinoğlu Halk Kütüphanesi, 401. The subject entry on *cū 'u'l-kelb* is in folios 131a, 131b, 132a.

⁴ For an overview of *Devā'ü'l-Emrāz*, see Ahmet Akdağ, "Sakızlı İsa Efendi'nin Deva-i Emraz İsimli Eseri," in *Sakızlı İsa Efendi ve Nizamü'l Edviye'si Üzerine İncelemeler*, ed. Sibel Murad and Mücahit Kaçar (İstanbul: Dün Bugün Yarın Yayınları, 2021).

⁵ The author discusses three other eating disorders: anorexia, dirt-eating, and ox-hunger (bulimia).

⁶ H. U. Ziolko, "Bulimia: A Historical Outline," *The International Journal of Eating Disorders* 20, no. 4 (December 1996): 350, [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1098-108X\(199612\)20:4<345::AID-EAT2>3.0.CO;2-N](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1098-108X(199612)20:4<345::AID-EAT2>3.0.CO;2-N).

period.⁷ Utilizing systematic methods of examination, İsa Efendi not only addresses dog-hunger and similar conditions, such as ox-hunger (i.e., *cū 'u'l-baḳar*; bulimia), but also medicalizes the broader phenomenon of appetite.

The entry pertains to consumption in two points: (1) From a broad perspective that also considers social and cultural practices of eating, it may offer insights into how such practices and their medicalization were shaped within larger trends of consumption. (2) The medicinal ingredients and compounds listed in the entry may help shed light on the marketplace and uses of them when read along with other types of sources (e.g. probate inventories) used by historians of consumption.

Transcription

Yüz elli beşinci bâb cū 'u'l-kelb beyânındadır

İtler iştihâsı dirler • ve fâriside gürisne-ü seg ve ârzü-yı seg daḥı dirler • ve efrenciler envâ '-i fame ḳanina⁸ dirler • ve rûmlar ve yûnâniler kino-limos dirler • ṭa 'âma doymaz dirler • ve 'arabda cū 'u'l-kelb dirler • cū 'u'l-kelb ile cū 'u'l-baḳar 'illetini ba 'zılar ikisin daḥı [131b] bir nev '-i illettir dimişlerdür • ve ba 'zı gürûh cū 'u'l-baḳar cū 'u'l-kelbden şoñradur dimişler ya 'nî cū 'u'l-kelb muḳaddem 'ârız olubdur cū 'u'l-baḳar şoñradan olur dimişler şaḥḥ ve cū 'u'l-kelb 'illeti ğalebe-i sevdâdan olur • ve sevdâ ṭalaktan mi 'deye varub ve fem-i mi 'de 'i lez 'ider • veyâḥûd sū 'u'l-mizâc-ı bârid veya sū 'u'l-mizâc-ı ḥâr veyâ sū 'u'l-mizâc ki cümle endâm ile ola • bunlar bu 'illete sebebdür • zîrâ yalnız sū 'u'l-mizâc fem-i mi 'dede olsa • ṭa 'âm iştihâsı olmazdı • bunda ḥod iştihâ çok olur dimişler • ve ifrâṭla iştihâ olmak sū 'u'l-mizâc sebebi ile cümle endâmlara irişüb beden mesâmların açar • ve ṭa 'âm daḥı cümle endâmlara irişdüğü gibi 'ale'l-fevr taḥlîl ḳabûl idüp ve beden mesâmından ṭaşra çıḳduğı gibi bedel-i taḥlîl tekrâr ṭa 'âm • ârzü idüp ve ṭalebi ḳavî olup şabra ṭâḳat kalmaz • meger nâçar ola • ve ṭa 'âm bulmaya • ve bu 'illet gâhî nezleden olur ki dimâğdan fem-i mi 'deye nâzil-i mādde sebab olur • ve dimâğdan nâzil olan bârid madde gerekdür ki fem-i mi 'de 'i daḥı tebrîd idüp ve cā 'izdür ki mi 'dede olan her ne ise ekşi olup lez 'ide • ve şehves⁹-i kelbî tevellüd ide • ve gâhî mi 'dede ve em 'âda olan uzun ḳurtlar mütevellid olmuş ola • ve ol

⁷ For instance, a fifteenth-century medical manual in Turkish also mentions *cū 'u'l-kelb*. See İbn-i Şerif, *Yâdigâr : On Beşinci Yüzyıl Türkçe Tıp Kitabı*, ed. Murat D. Çekin, trans. Orhan Sakin, Yahya Okutan, and Mecit Yıldız (Istanbul: Merkezefendi Geleneksel Tıp Derneği : Zeytinburnu Belediyesi, 2017), 53, 153.

⁸ *De fame canina*.

⁹ Şehvet.

ğidālar ki ol maḥalle vāşıl ola cezb idüb kendüye ğidā idinüb āḥir lāzım olmayanı biraz yolından göndere • mi‘de ve mi‘ā ḥālī kala • ve tekrār ğidāya taleb ola • bunuñ ‘alāmeti sevdā fem-i mi‘dede ise • her nesne ki tenāvül ider hāzmsız taşra çıkar • ve endāmlar ḥişşesin alamaz • ve beden lāğm olmaḥ lāzım gelür • ve sevdānuñ ḥumūziyeti fem-i mi‘de‘i yakmağa başlar • ve kaçan ki ta‘ām tenāvül ide • fem-i mi‘de te‘affunı zā‘il ola • ve bārid sū‘u‘l-mizācdan daḥı bu ḥāller ‘aynī ile böyle vāḳi‘ olur • ve eger sū‘u‘l-mizāc cümle endāmlar müşāreketi ile • olursa nişānı budur ki • ğidā tez taḥlil olup ‘atş galebe ider • ve beden naşībini alamaz • ve nezle ‘alāmeti daḥı ‘aynī ile böyledür • ammā kurt tevellüd itmiş ise em‘āda ve mi‘dede ḥarāret ve burun gicimek aña dāldur • bunlara ‘ilāc eger mi‘dede sevdā ise • bāsiliḳdan¹⁰ veya üseylemden¹¹ faşd lāzımdur • ba‘dehū maṭbūḥ eftimün ile istifrāğ gerekdür • ve ṭalak üstine kuru hacāmat şişesi koyub çizmemek gerekdür • ve mi‘deye ıtrıfılāt ile yā cüvāriş¹²-i cevzi ile kuvvet vireler • ve cevz-i bevvalar • ve rufadān yumurda şarusı ve semüz kuzı ve tavuk kebāpları • ve kebāb altına yağlu tirīdler idüp vireler • ve cerblü şorbalar • ve yağlu kemükler • ve süd ile taze kuzı ve oğlak ṭabḥ itmek ve ta‘āmlarına ṭoraḳ otı ve noḥūd ve ḥavlenḳān ve dārḳini katarlar • ve ‘ūd-ı cüvārişleri vireler • ve rengin şerāblar ve mey-i puḥteler ki taḡ üzüminden ola kifāyet ider • ve eger mi‘deye bārid nezle irmiş ise • bürüdet zāhir olduḡı gibi evvelā kay’ itdürüp ba‘dehū ayāric-i fayḳarā¹³ ile mi‘de‘i pāk [132a] idüp ve ba‘dehū ma‘cūn-ı kemmūnī ve sinciriyyā¹⁴ ve tiryāk-ı keb[ir]ler ve devā‘ü‘l-misk-ü meşer¹⁵ nāfi‘dür • ve ta‘āmlarına ıssı otlar koyalar • ve şerāblardan daḥı ḥār ve mu‘tedil olanlardan virüp bārid buḥārı tesḳin ve mi‘de‘i teşhīn

¹⁰ The vein located below the arm; also known as “the heart vein.” See “el-bāseliḳ” in Ekrem Demir, “Hezārfeñ Hüseyin B. Ca‘fer İstānḳöy’nin ‘Lisānū‘l-Etibbā’ Adlı Tıp Lügatı Üzerinde Dil İncelemesi (İnceleme-Metin-Sözlük)” (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Istanbul University, 2011), 122. This is *vena basilica* in Latin. See, Gürsel Ortuḡ, “İbn Sina’nın Kan Alınacak Damarlar Risalesi Üzerine Bir Bakış,” in *Uluslararası İbni Sînâ Sempozyumu Bildirileri 17-20 Ağustos 1983* (Uluslararası İbni Sînâ Sempozyumu, Ankara: Milli Kütüphane Yayınları, 1984), 260.

¹¹ The vein located between the ring and little fingers on the back of the hand. See “el-üslīm” in Demir, “Hezārfeñ Hüseyin B. Ca‘fer İstānḳöy’nin ‘Lisānū‘l-Etibbā’ Adlı Tıp Lügatı Üzerinde Dil İncelemesi (İnceleme-Metin-Sözlük),” 100. This is *vena salvatella* in Latin. See, Ortuḡ, “İbn Sina’nın Kan Alınacak Damarlar Risalesi Üzerine Bir Bakış,” 263.

¹² Cüvāriş: generic name of mixtures specifically intended to facilitate digestion. For cüvāriş see “cevāriş” in Terzioḡlu, *Helvahane Defteri ve Topkapı Sarayında Eczacılık*, 76.

¹³ Ayāric-i fayḳarā: a laxative or non-laxative compound. See “eyāric-i faykara” in Terzioḡlu, 76.

¹⁴ This is most likely the herb known as *sencer*, which İsa described as hot-dry in his pharmacopeia. Sakızlı İsa Efendi, *Nizamül Edviye*, ed. Sibel Murad and Mükerrrem Bedizel Aydın (Türkiye Bilimler Akademisi (TÜBA), 2019), 451. The humoral characteristics of *sencer* also aligns with the therapy suggested here.

¹⁵ The text writes مشر. However, it is possible that the author meant to write *mürr*, as *devā‘ü‘l-misk-ü mürr* (the bitter musk cure) was an available recipe. The other musk-based treatment was *devā‘ü‘l-misk-ü helv* (the sweet musk cure). See Arslan Terzioḡlu, ed., *Helvahane Defteri ve Topkapı Sarayında Eczacılık = Eine Bisher Unbekannte Handschrift Über Die Herstellung Der Arzneien Im Topkapı-Schloss in Istanbul Und Ihre Bedeutung Für Die Geschichte Der Pharmazie*, Tıpkı Basımlar Dizisi 7 (İstanbul: Arkeoloji ve Sanat Yayınları, 1992), 76.

ideler • ve bu bâbda ma'cûn -ı kendir daḥı kay'[a] nâfi'dür **ma'cûn -ı kendir** ḥîr-i bevṵa ve cevz-i bevṵa • fûlfûl ve dâr-ı fûlfûl her birinden beş dirhem ḥavlencân ve zencebîl her birinden yedi dirhem kendir otuz dirhem ola • 'asel ile ma'cûn idüp • bunuñ miḳdâr-ı isti'mâli iki dirhemdür • ve eger sũ'u'l-mizâc-ı ḥâr olup mi'deye ve cümle endâmlara te'sîr itmiş ola • ve cümle endâm müşâreketi ile ola cümle endâma mersîn yağı tîlâ itmek ve bârid şuda iclâs itdürmek ve riyâzet ve ḥareketden men' itmek gerekdür • ve ekşi turunç ve ribâs ve lîmûn şularını ve şerâblarını vireler • ve ḡidâsın buzaḡu eti vireler • ve eger mi'dede ḡurt tevellüd itmiş ise • deryâda biten bir cins otluk ki aña soḡlucan otı dirler • sirke ile ezüp ve içirüp ol ḡurtlar ishâl ile çıkar • ve şâhtere ve hindibâ şerâbı her biri acı olduḡıyçün ol ḡurtları çıkarub illet zâ'il olur • ve daḥı ishâle müte'alliḡ edviye ile • müleyyin şerbet virüb mi'de ve em'âyı • daḥı pāk • ideler •

Translation¹⁶

One-hundred-fifty-fifth section is on dog-hunger.

[They] call it the appetite of dogs [in Turkish]. In Persia, they call it *gürisne-i seg* and *arzũ-yı seg*. Europeans call it the sort of *fame kanina*. And Rûms and Greeks call it *kino-limos*. They call it [an] insatiable hunger. [In the land of] Arabs, they call it *cũ'u'l-kelb*. Some said that [this] dog-hunger and ox-hunger (*cũ'u'l-baḡar*) are of the same sort. And some said ox-hunger follows dog-hunger, meaning dog-hunger comes first, and later ox-hunger appears. The malady of dog-hunger is due to an excess of black bile. From the spleen black bile reaches the stomach and therein irritates the mouth of the stomach. Differently, it is due to imbalance of cold temperament (*sũ'u'l-mizâc-ı bârid*), of hot temperament (*sũ'u'l-mizâc-ı ḥâr*), or of the whole bodily temperament. These are the causes of this malady. Had the imbalance transpired only in the mouth of the stomach, insatiability would not have occurred. Nevertheless, there is [an unnecessary] eating appetite in this instance. Extreme appetite, stemming from the imbalanced temperament, spreads to the whole body and opens the pores. When the food also reaches the whole body, it becomes hastily digested and purged from the body via pores. [Thus], the food is sought once again, and the demand becomes so intense that the person would

¹⁶ Translation of *materia medica* names is based on the modern use of such terms. Some of the terms denoting unidentified plants, anatomical references, and units of measure are left in Turkish to avoid any misinterpretation.

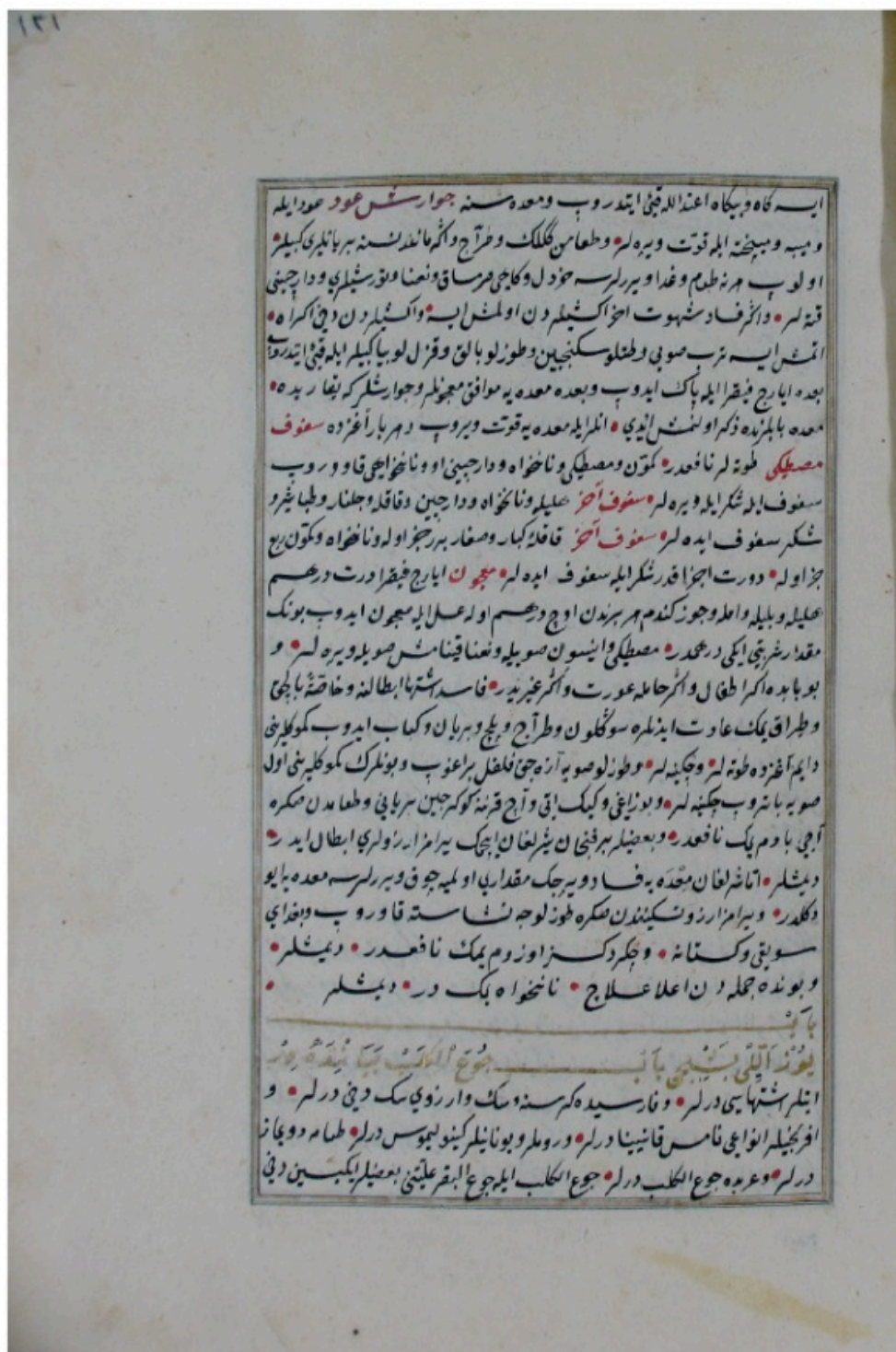
languish struggling to be patient. It is [an effort] in vain. [And] there is no food. This malady can also be caused by discharge [of a bodily substance], that is, because a substance descends from the brain to the mouth of the stomach. This cold-tempered substance, descended from the brain, renders therein cold, too. It is possible that it acidifies and irritates the entire stomach. Consequently, dog-passion occurs, and sometimes long worms are born in the stomach and the bowels. [These worms] consume all the food and send away the unwanted remnants. Stomach and bowels remain emptied. Ultimately, the demand for food upsurges once again. The **symptoms** of it: If the black bile is in the stomach, everything consumed would exit [the body] undigested. The bodily organs cannot take their share. The body needs to purge. The acidity of the black bile burns the mouth of the stomach. The food is consumed thereafter, and decomposition [in] the mouth of the stomach stops. The same set of occurrences takes place also in the imbalance of cold temperament. If it is due to the imbalance of the whole bodily temperament, the sign is that the food dissolves hastily and then occurs fever. Overall, the body cannot take its share [of the food.] The same symptom appears also in discharge. Yet, if worms began emerging, fever in stomach and bowels as well as running nose attest to it. The **cure** for this: if the black bile is in the stomach, bloodletting from either the basilic vein or vena salvatella is needed. Then, puking with decocted epithymum is needed. Also needed is to apply dry cups on the spleen. Following that, they shall invigorate the stomach with trefoils and the nuts-based digestive compound. And nutmegs. They should serve soft-boiled egg yolk, well-fed lamb and chicken kebab whose underneath is put fatty bread. Fat-rich soups. Fatty bones. And fresh lamb cooked with milk. They should also add dill, chickpeas, galangal, and cinnamon in their food. They shall give the oud-based digestive compound. Colorful beverages and boiled drinks, made with mountain grapes, are adequate. If the discharge is already descended to the stomach, as soon as the coldness appears, they shall make [the person] puke, and they purify the stomach with laxative compounds. Subsequently, paste of cummin and *sinciriyyā*¹⁷ and the great theriac and the bitter musk cure are beneficial. They shall add

¹⁷ See the transcription above for explanation.

sour weeds in their food. They shall give hot and mild ones from their beverages so that the cold organs find soothing and the stomach gets heated. In this respect, the paste of hemp is also beneficial to [help] purge. **The paste of hemp** small cardamom¹⁸ and nutmeg. Black pepper and *piper longum*: five *dirhems* from each. Galangal and ginger: seven *dirhems* from each. Hemp shall be thirty *dirhems*. Mix with honey to make a paste. The amount of consumption of this is two *dirhems*. If there is an imbalance of hot temperament, which has affected the stomach and all organs, it is necessary to apply myrtle oil to the whole body. Also having person sit in cold water, and prohibiting from ascetism and movement. And give sour orange, rhubarb, and lemon juices and their sherbets. And give veal meat as food. If worms have developed in the stomach, there is this type of weed that grows in the sea, which they call soğlucan otu. Crash it with vinegar and administer it, the worms will exit through diarrhea. Since the sherbet of fumeroor and chicory is bitter, it expes the worms and the malady is removed. Moreover, give mild sherbet with cures for diarrhea so that they purify the stomach and the bowels.

¹⁸ I have opted for a direct translation of “*küçük kakule*,” that is used to describe *ḥīr-i bevvā* in Sakızlı İsa Efendi’s pharmacopoeia titled *Nizāmü’l-Edviyye*. *Nizamül Edviye*, 353.

Facsimile





Bibliography

- Akdağ, Ahmet. "Sakızlı İsa Efendi'nin Deva-i Emraz İsimli Eseri." In *Sakızlı İsa Efendi ve Nizamü'l Edviye'si Üzerine İncelemeler*, edited by Sibel Murad and Mücahit Kaçar. İstanbul: Dün Bugün Yarın Yayınları, 2021.
- Demir, Ekrem. "Hezârfen Hüseyin B. Ca'fer İstânköyî'nin 'Lisânü'l-Etibbâ' Adlı Tıp Lügatı Üzerinde Dil İncelemesi (İncleme-Metin-Sözlük)." Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Istanbul University, 2011.
- "Dog-Hunger." In *Oxford English Dictionary*, December 2024.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/9332899614>.
- İbn-i Şerif. *Yâdigâr : On Beşinci Yüzyıl Türkçe Tıp Kitabı*. Edited by Murat D. Çekin. Translated by Orhan Sakin, Yahya Okutan, and Mecit Yıldız. İstanbul: Merkezefendi Geleneksel Tıp Derneği : Zeytinburnu Belediyesi, 2017.
- Ortuğ, Gürsel. "İbn Sina'nın Kan Alınacak Damarlar Risalesi Üzerine Bir Bakış." In *Uluslararası İbni Sînâ Sempozyumu Bildirileri 17-20 Ağustos 1983*. Ankara: Milli Kütüphane Yayınları, 1984.
- Sakızlı İsa Efendi. *Nizamül Edviye*. Edited by Sibel Murad and Mükerrerrem Bedizel Aydın. Türkiye Bilimler Akademisi (TÜBA), 2019.
- Terzioğlu, Arslan, ed. *Helvahane Defteri ve Topkapı Sarayında Eczacılık =: Eine Bisher Unbekannte Handschrift Über Die Herstellung Der Arzneien Im Topkapı-Schloss in Istanbul Und Ihre Bedeutung Für Die Geschichte Der Pharmazie*. Tıpkı Basımlar Dizisi 7. İstanbul: Arkeoloji ve Sanat Yayınları, 1992.
- Ziolko, H. U. "Bulimia: A Historical Outline." *The International Journal of Eating Disorders* 20, no. 4 (December 1996): 345–58. [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1098-108X\(199612\)20:4<345::AID-EAT2>3.0.CO;2-N](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1098-108X(199612)20:4<345::AID-EAT2>3.0.CO;2-N).