



## Brief history of the University of Bologna and of the School of Medicine

*The city of Bologna counts today 300.000 inhabitants in the heart of the city and its name was Felsina during the Etruscan Age in the 4th century b.C and was one of the most important city of the “Pianura Padana” area. After the settlement of the Boi, a celtic Tribe, its name was Bononia (bona means fortified place) and under the Romans, 189 b.C., the town grew into a thriving city.*

*It was at the height of its splendour in the Middle Ages and became one of the most culturally active and densely populated European towns. The University dates back its birth to that period.*

*Bologna is well known today for 3 nicknames “The Red”, “The Fat”, “The Learned”:*

*“the Red” because of the reflection of the bricks with which those towers, rooftops and palazzos were built and for its communist leanings especially in the '60 and '70 with the student demonstration;*

*“the Fat” because it is the birthplace of mortadella, ragù and tortellini. According to a legend tortellini was inspired by the bellybutton of Venus, the goddess of love;*

*“the Learned” because it hosts the oldest continually operating university in the Western world.*

*The University is famous for its very ancient origins and is called Alma Mater Studiorum Bononiensis i.e. nourishing mother of studies of Bologna) to describe it as the place offering cultural nourishment.*

*In its Logo appears the Latin motto: Alma mater studiorum – Petrus ubique pater legum Bononia mater i.e. Nourishing mother of the Studies – St Petrus is father of everywhere and Bologna is mother of the law. Its coat of arms depicts the emblems of the Corporations, more specifically of the two Universities that founded the Studio: Jurists and Artists with the three Medical studies.*

*In the nineteenth century a committee of historians, led by the famous Italian poet Giosuè Carducci, attributed the birth of the University to the year 1088 when masters of Grammar, Rhetoric and Logic began to devote themselves to the law. The earliest scholars were Pepone and Irnerio called “lucerna iuris” who began the study of the entire “Corpus Juris Civilis” and organized the school of law.*

*An important event was the Constitution Habita promulgated by Frederick I Barbarossa in 1158 in which he granted privileges to scholars of Bologna and declared University legally a place where research could develop independently from any other power.*

*The oldest continuously operating university in the world born as a free and independent student institution. Professors were hired by the students to give instruction and were paid with donation called “collectio” as science could not be paid because it was a gift of God. Lectures were held in the teacher’s private houses and only later the municipality assumed the duty of paying a fixed salary to teachers.*

*The foreign students formed “universitas”, community (thus the university) of mutual aid societies of foreign students called “nations” that of the Cismontanes and that of the Ultramontanes (i.e. from this side and from the other side of the Alps). In the 12<sup>th</sup> c. the former comprised 17 “Nations”, the latter 14. The nations were organized on a plan similar to that of the guilds and in the Archigimnasium, historical seat of the University, it is worth seeing nearly 6000 students coat of arms. The most famous Collegio of Spain, among them founded between 13<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> c., is still active to this days.*



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*The lectures were divided into two categories: ordinary and extraordinary. The first were held in the morning from 6 am, the extraordinary in the afternoon up to 9 pm. Punctuality was enforced at the schools with extreme rigor. The professors were obliged to begin their lectures when the bells of St Peter's began to ring for mass.*

*The ancient St. Peter's was the Church where the examinations were held. Up to the 18<sup>th</sup> c. the graduation ceremony consisted of two parts: the private examination and the public examination with a ceremony, called conventactio. After having received the degree of doctor the graduated obtained a gold ring and the magisterial cap on his head and a benediction.*

*In 1316 the Universitas Artistarum was fully recognised as an institution for all Arts faculties and began to collaborate with the ancient school of jurists. Before end 15<sup>th</sup> c. the restoration of the Aristotelian Philosophy and Mathematics opened the way to scholars of all liberal arts. The already started logic, rhetoric and grammar had expanded to include philosophy, Greek, Hebrew studies, literature, theology, astronomy, experimental science and medicine.*

*Many famous Italian writers and artists attended this University as: Dante Alighieri, Francesco Tetrarca, Guido Guinizelli, Cino da Pistoia, Cecco d'Ascoli, Re Enzo, Salimbene da Parma, Coluccio Salutati, San Carlo Borromeo, Torquato Tasso, Laura Bassi, Carlo Goldoni, Giosuè Carducci, Umberto Eco. Also Pico della Mirandola and Leon Battista Alberti studied here and Niccolò Copernico was student in Pontifical Right.*

*In the following years many illustrious foreign personages attended here lectures as Thomas Becket, Paracelso, Erasmo da Rotterdam, Papa Niccolò V, Raimondo di Peñafort, Albrecht Dürer e many others.*

*Worthy of a special mention is the School of Medicine: it became faculty in 1219 thanks to a Papal Bull. Still today, in the upper right hand corner of the university coat of arm appear St. Cosma and St. Damian traditionally acclaimed as the patron saints of the physician and apothecary and protectors of the School of Medicine. These 2 brothers were Syrian Christians who were reputed to have effected a leg transplantation and many miraculous cures before their martyrdom in the reign of Emperor Diocletian.*

*It is interesting to note that once the teaching of Medicine were three: one the practice, one the philosophy and the third astrology, the study of the influence of the stars on the human health. The astrology teaching provided the first impulse to astronomical studies whose most famous student was Copernicus which formed the basis of modern astronomy.*

*However, at first there were no regular schools of medicine since the arrival of Taddeo Alderotti from Florence (1223-1303) who gained great wealth and fame from his medical practice. Also Dante refer him in the Paradiso (XII, 82-85) and seems to have attended his lectures when studying in Bologna. Alderotti wrote the most ancient medical book in Italian on the preservation of health and collected the consilia, clinical cases. From that time onward the medical faculty grew in importance.*



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*Surgery was a subordinate subject at the beginning but thanks to Ugo Borgognoni, a very famous surgeon, and to his son the domenicani Friar Theodoric of Lucca (1205-98) whose tomb can be seen in the Church of St Dominic, it received special attention. He was the first to introduce the “spongia somnifera” an anesthesia to reduce surgical pain and change the treatment of wounds. The merit of the surgeon William of Saliceto (1201-1277) was to reintroduce into surgery the use of knife instead of the cautery used by the Arabs and to publish a book on practical surgery. In that period the teacher of medicine assumed the title of Doctor and later of Professor.*

*The medical faculty became famous in the 13<sup>th</sup> century for reviving the practice of human dissection, which had not been used in Europe since Roman times. The first lessons of anatomy were held in the private apartments of the teachers and an anatomic theatre only was built in 1637. The cadavers were never of native of Bologna but either of individuals not claimed by their relatives or of prostitutes and persons who had been executed. The dissection was often depicted in drawings where the professor was seated on his chair holding an anatomy book and in front of him was a surgeon or a barber dissecting a cadaver on a marble table.*

*The foundations of modern anatomy were laid by Mundinus (1270-1326) who dates the beginning of regular systematic teaching of anatomy with dissection as a fundamental of the curriculum studii of medicians. In 1316 he wrote “Anothomia” the most popular anatomical text for all the medical university up to the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The work of Mondino contributed greatly to the fame of Bologna as a medical school.*

*In the 16<sup>th</sup> c. the first studies of “natural magic” i.e. natural science were performed in Bologna and Ulisse Aldrovandi was one of the first entomologist in the history and the founder of the Botanical Garden in 1568.*

*An important figure was Gaspare Tagliacozzi (1545-1599) professor of plastic surgery who discovered a method of surgical nose reconstruction known as “the Italian method” which involves removing a skin flap from the arm to reconstruct the nose.*

*But the golden era of the University coincided with the teachings of Marcello Malpighi (1628-1694) who employed the microscope for anatomical research. He discovered the lung function and devoted himself to research into neurology. He became professor of international fame and discovered some kidney cells that were named after him on his honour. He became member of the English Royal Society which published his Opera Omnia.*

*In 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries the School of Medicine has many doctors luminaries:*

*the anatomist Luigi Galvani (1737-1798) who discovered the bioelectricity and related influence on human body; Pierpaolo Molinelli (1702-1763) who introduced the first surgical course on human body using three-dimensional wax tablets and clay figures and did lectures in the two main hospitals called “of Life” for assistance to pilgrims and invalids and “of Death” for the death row convicts; Professor of School of Surgery Giovan Antonio Galli (1708-1782) who set up a School of Obstetrics at the Palazzo Poggi. He taught the science of birthing both to physician and to midwives using wax tablets and clay models of the uterus simulated the real situations of gestation and childbirth. Not less important were Alessandro Codivilla (1861-1912) and Francesco Rizzoli (1809-1880) who are nowadays considered the fathers of the modern Orthopaedics and some of*



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*their operations, the result of brilliant intuition and genuine innovation, are still performed in our operating rooms. The actual Rizzoli Orthopaedic Trauma Centre of Bologna is dedicated to his memory; Pietro Loreta (1831-1889) was head of surgery at the University of Bologna for treatment and gastric surgery and often used surgical instruments he modified to tailor them to his specific techniques.*

*Surgeon Giuseppe Ruggi (1844-1925) was a true innovator in improving hygienec and antiseptic practices in operating rooms. Cesare Cavina (1888–1935) was a great surgeon who, during World War I, acquired remarkable experience in the healing of wounds and introduced plastic surgery for the treatment of facial injuries and mandible transplantation. He treated horrific war injuries and also contrived a therapy for the accompanying pain.*

*It is worth visiting the Palace of Archiginnasio(=school of primary importance), the ancient and prestigious home of the University of Bologna from 1563 to 1803 and built by architect Antonio Moranti. The building was commissioned by Pope Pius IV to create a single place where various faculties could be taught as most were dispersed throughout the city. It is on two levels, with two staircases separated by a study rooms for Legisti (civil and canon law) and Arts students (philosophy, maths, physical-natural science and medicine) and the Aula Magna called Stabat Mater for the Rossini Composition. On the upper floor houses the famous wooden Anatomical Theater built in 1637 by Antonio Levanti. It appears like an amphitheatre and there were held the anatomy lessons analysing and dissecting a body on the marble table in the middle of the room. The room is surrounded by the statues of the 12 great masters of medicine including the Greek Hippocrates and Roman Galeno. The seat of the professor is topped by a baldaquin and supported by the statues of two naked and skinless men, known as "gli spellati".*

*In 1988 the ninth centennial of the University was celebrated.*

*Nowadays it has about 80,000 students in its 23 schools. It hay University Campus in Imola, Ravenna, Forlì, Cesena and Rimini and a branch center abroad in Buenos Aires.*

*It is considered the first in Italy for importance and rich of courses held by international professors. It is also an world's meeting point for academicians and scholars.*

### **Tour to the main places of the University and the School of Medicine:**

- **via Luigi Zamboni:** historic street located in the center of Bologna and heart of university life;
- **the Archiginnasium and the Anatomic Theater:** respectively house of the University and place of experimentation and research;
- **Museum of Palazzo Poggi:** designed in the mid 16th century became the new seat of the National University after the reform of Napoleon's period (1803). It was the seat of the Science Institution.





FONDAZIONE  
INTERNAZIONALE  
MENARINI

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- **Museum of anatomy and pathological histology “Luigi Cattaneo”:** contains a collection of the famous wax tablets and clay models which made Bologna famous in Europe, most of them realized by Giuseppe Astorri and Cesare Bettini.
- **Complex or Santa Maria della Vita and Hospital of the Death:** it shows the past of the public health service in Bologna with images of medical tools and scientific materials. Also furnitures, vestments and a collection of the hospital.
- **The Botanical Garden:** founded by Ulisse Aldrovandi nel 1568
- **Church of S. Francesco and S. Domenico:** respectively considered a reference for Artist students of medicine, philosophy, arithmetic, astronomy, logic, rethoric, grammar and the Legisti, law students.
- **House of the Spanish College:** the College was founded in 1364 by Cardinal Gil de Albornoz and endowed with the Royal title by Emperor Charles V in 1530 to host Spanish students attending the Studium. It is the only university college in continental Europe to have remained active from the Middle Age until today.