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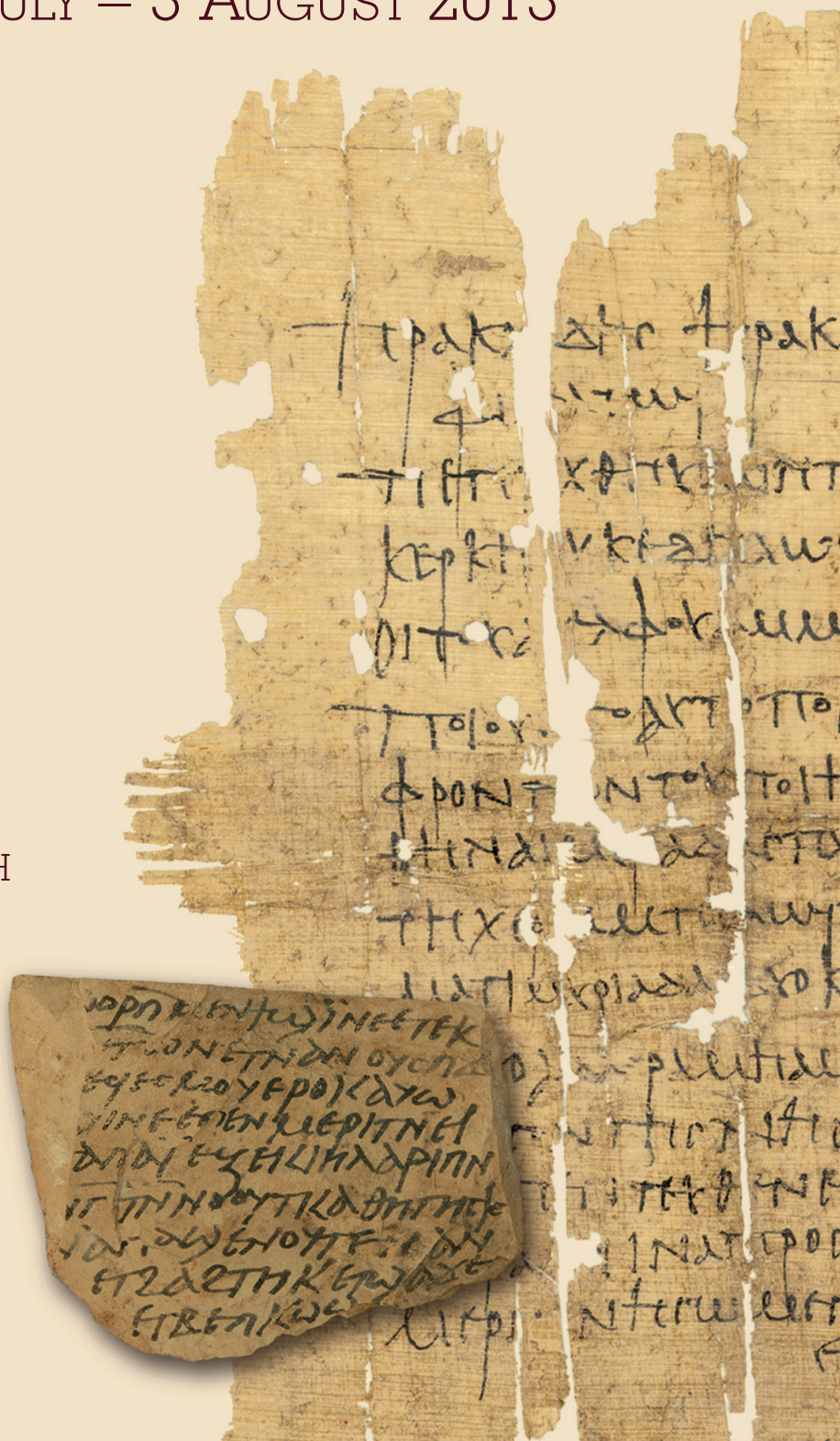
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Isabella Bonati

**BETWEEN TEXT AND CONTEXT:
P. OSLO II 54 RECONSIDERED***

INTRODUCTION

THIS IS A STUDY of *P. Oslo II 54*,¹ which contains an intact private letter on papyrus requesting a medicine-chest and some remedies. The papyrus was published with little commentary by Samson Eitrem and Leiv Amundsen in the second volume of the *Papyri Osloenses* (1931), and is preserved in the University Library of Oslo. I was given the opportunity to carry out a direct inspection of the document during a research stay at the University of Oslo (August 2012 – April 2013) having been awarded the Yggdrasil grant by the Research Council of Norway. My inspection led to a review of the text focusing particularly on material and contextual aspects, such as provenance, date, reuse and terminology.²

* This contribution is part of the project ERC-AdG-2013-DIGMEDTEXT, Grant Agreement No: 339828 (Prof. Isabella Andorlini), funded by the EU at the University of Parma. See the webpage at the address <http://www.papirologia.unipr.it/ERC/index.html>.

¹ TM 28902.

² I wish to thank Prof. Isabella ANDORLINI (Parma) and Prof. Anastasia MARAVELA (Oslo) for offering constructive criticism. Thanks are also extended to Gunn HAALAND and Andrea GASPARINI for supplying a photograph of the back of the document.

The papyrus contains ten complete lines of text written along the fibres. Black ink and quite a sharp pen were used. All the margins have been preserved. A vertical break corresponding to the central fold does not compromise the text.

The *editio princeps* makes no mention of the provenance, which is referred to as ‘unknown’ in the papyrological databases. But in the inventory of the University Library of Oslo I found that the papyrus (inv. no. 541) belongs to a group acquired in 1928 for the price of £ 24 through the papyrus cartel of the British Museum under the direction of Harold Iris Bell.³ Since most of these papyri (inv. nos. 540–563) were bought from natives of Behnasa (28 March 1928), it is likely that the document comes from area around Oxyrhynchos.⁴

According to the editors the papyrus dates back to the 2nd or 3rd century AD, but I think that the date can be narrowed down on paleographical grounds. The hand, a current script often mixed with cursive forms with a prevalence of rounded traits, is competent and quite elegant. The letters are often connected to each other, sometimes in slightly distorted ligatures, such as in the case of $\epsilon\iota$. A tendency to extend some letters, in particular ι and φ , along a vertical dimension is clearly discernible. Also ρ extends far below the lines, ending with a hook. The general impression and individual letter-forms display certain affinities especially with *P. Med.* I 51 of the mid 2nd cent. AD (AD 161, Oxyrhynchos) and *P. Oxy.* LII 3694 of the 3rd cent. AD (AD 218–225?), parallels which may be taken as *terminus a quo* and as *terminus ad quem* respectively.⁵ Therefore, I would date this handwriting to the second half of the 2nd century or the first half of the 3rd century AD. This hypothesis is supported by onomastics: one of the personal names mentioned in the document, $\Omega\rho\epsilon\iota\omega\nu$, the most common variant of $\Omega\rho\acute{\iota}\omega\nu$ influenced by the Egyptian form of the Greek name, has

³ The original inventory number is BM 1928 I (5).

⁴ On the *papyrus cartels* in general, see J. G. KEENAN, ‘The history of the discipline’, [in:] R. S. BAGNALL (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology*, Oxford 2009, pp. 66–67. On the Oslo collection and its acquisition, see respectively <http://ub-fmserver.uio.no/Collection.html> and <http://ub-fmserver.uio.no/Acquisition.html>.

⁵ Other partial parallels are, e.g., *PSI* XII 1225 (AD 156–157, Alexandria) and *CPR* I 32 (AD 218, Soknopaiou Nesos).

indeed a remarkable peak of attestations in documentary texts of the 3rd cent. AD, notably from the Oxyrhynchites.⁶

On the front side, some hitherto unnoticed traces of ink,⁷ as well as the condition of the writing surface in the middle, seem to reveal the presence of a previous text erased by washing, and reused as a support for our document; and thus it can be classified as a palimpsest. Other light traces on the left side of the back, that have hitherto been ignored, run perpendicular to the length, across the fibres (one of the middle ones may be compatible with an η). These traces, extending approximately 2 cm from the left edge, seem to correspond to the right side of a column of writing. On the right side of the back, an impression seems to suggest a round seal with two oblique grooves on its sides, presumably two pieces of string. The impression also has a few remains which under a microscope look like the fibres of a rope. Three thick lines, running parallel to the central fold, probably completed the seal. Thus, it seems likely that the text of the letter was written on a sheet cut away on three sides from a broader papyrus previously used for other, maybe official purposes. The condition of the only original edge, the left one, is worse than the other edges and also looks different. It corresponds to the part where the seal is located on the back. A possible reconstruction of its material 'history' suggests that the papyrus may have had three 'lives': the first one, the *scriptura interior* of a documentary text on the front side (doc. 1), sealed on the back, then washed off; the second one, a document on the back against the fibres (doc. 2); the third one, the smaller document cut from the original and folded in the middle to accommodate the letter on the front (doc. 3).

⁶ See the following page of the *Trismegistos People*: <http://www.trismegistos.org/nam/detail.php?record=4746>. See also F. PREISIGKE, *Namenbuch*, Heidelberg 1922, p. 497 and D. FORABOSCHI, *Onomasticum alterum papyrologicum* [= suppl. to PREISIGKE, *Namenbuch*], Milan 1971, pp. 351–352 s.v. The other name, *Ἀπολλώνιος*, is of no help being attested especially in the 3rd–1st cent. BC, see <http://www.trismegistos.org/nam/detail.php?record=1> as well as PREISIGKE, *Namenbuch* (cit. *supra*) pp. 41–42 and FORABOSCHI, *Onomasticum* (cit. *supra*), pp. 42–43 s.v.

⁷ In particular two very visible ink traces in the right half of the upper edge, unidentifiable traces in the lower margin, other traces among the letters and in the interlinear spaces, such as the ones below α of $\delta\acute{\iota}\alpha$ at l. 3. See the image of the front at <http://ub-prod-or-imgs.uio.no/OPES/jpg/541r.jpg>.

The letter, written by a certain Horeion, living away from home for personal or professional reasons, is addressed to his father, Apollonios, who presumably lives in Oxyrhynchos. Horeion is sending (κόμισαι διὰ γράμματος) a sum of money (908 silver drachmae), through an ἔνοικος,⁸ no doubt a trustworthy person from the same village as Horeion.⁹ The most interesting point is that Horeion asks his father to send him the portable medicine-chest (πέμψον | μοι τὴν φαρμακοθήκην), and also wants his father to ask the doctor for two remedies with different properties: a biting, efficient *pharmakon*, and a much milder one (αἰτήσας π[αρ]ὰ τοῦ ἱατροῦ | φάρμακον δακνηρὸν καὶ ἥδύτερον).¹⁰

⁸ The word bears the general meaning of ‘inhabitant [...], dweller’ (*LSJ*⁹ 571 s.v.), but it acquires more punctual semantic values in the papyri. In some official documents it denotes the ‘inhabitant’ of a city or of a district (cf. e.g. *BGU* II 504, 2 [2nd cent. AD, Arsinoites]) or the ‘inhabitant’ of a house (cf. e.g. *BGU* II 362, 9, 7 [AD 215, Arsinoites]; 494, 2 and 5 [2nd cent. AD, Arsinoites]; 498, 4 and 6 and 8 [2nd cent. AD, Arsinoites]; *P. Oslo* III 111 *passim* [AD 235, Oxyrhynchos]), also in private documents like receipts of rent (cf. e.g. *P. Wash. Univ.* I 45, 2 [3rd–4th cent. AD, Oxyrhynchos] and *SB* XIV 11400, 4 and 8 [AD 194, Philoteris]) and letters (cf. e.g. *P. Oslo* II 48, 8 [AD 61, provenance unknown] and *P. Oxy.* LV 3809, 9–10 [2nd–3rd cent. AD]). In other cases the term has the collective meaning of ‘household’, especially in the formula ἀσπάζομαι or ἄσπασαι τοὺς ἐνοίκους πάντας, cf. *BGU* II 523, 25–26 (1st–4th cent. AD, Arsinoites), *SB* IV 11851, 13–15 (2nd–3rd cent. AD, provenance unknown), *P. Fay.* 126, 8–12 (2nd–3rd cent. AD, Philoteris), *P. Tèbt.* II 415, 10–13 (2nd cent. AD) and 422, 11–15 (3rd cent. AD).

⁹ See Isabella ANDORLINI & A. MARCONE, *Medicina, medico e società nel mondo antico*, Firenze 2004, p. 190. In contrast, it is interpreted as ‘Hausgenossen’ by Andrea JÖRDENS (2010), ‘Griechische Texte aus Ägypten’, [in:] B. JANOWSKI & D. SCHWEMER (eds), *Texte zum Rechts- und Wirtschaftsleben [= Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments*, Neue Folge 5], München 2010, p. 346.

¹⁰ Italian translation in ANDORLINI & MARCONE, *Medicina* (cit. n. 9), pp. 190–191; German translation in JÖRDENS, ‘Griechische Texte’ (cit. n. 9), p. 346. The construction αἰτεῖν παρὰ τινος bears the common meaning of ‘ask for, demand’ (*LSJ*⁹ 44 s.v.), cf. e.g. *X. An.* I 3, 16, 4 and *Cyr.* I 6, 6, 3, and it is especially attested in late and ecclesiastical authors, often in the formula αἰτεῖν παρὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ, *petere a Deo* (cf. e.g. *Joan. Chrys.* LV 682, 38; 684, 62; LX 432, 18 Migne). The expression αἰτήσας π[αρ]ὰ τοῦ ἱατροῦ | φάρμακον of our papyrus is paralleled by *Joan. Chrys.* LI 47, 13–14 Migne αἰτεῖν διδάσκει παρὰ τοῦ ἱατροῦ τῶν ψυχῶν τῆς ἀφέσεως τὰ φάρμακα (*docet ab animarum medico petere veniae remediae*), in a clearly metaphorical context.

TEXT AND TRANSLATION

P. Oslo II 54 (inv. 541)
Oxyrhynchos/Oxyrhynchites

7 × 9.7 cm

2nd half of the 2nd/
1st half of the 3rd cent. AD

→

Ὡρείων Ἀπολλωνίῳ

τῷ πατρὶ χαίρειν.

κόμισαι διὰ γράματος ἀργ(υρίου)

4 (δραχμὰς) ἣν ὅν ἔπεμψα σὺν

τινὶ ἐγγίκῳ(ι). πέμψον

μοι τὴν φαρμακοθήκην

αἰτήσας π[αρ]ὰ τοῦ ἱατροῦ

8 φάρμακον δακνηρόν

καὶ ἕτερον ἡδύτερον.

ἐρρωσθ(αί) σε εὖχ(ομαι).

3 *l. γράματος* || 4 *l. ὁ*

Horeion to his father Apollonios, greetings. Receive by letter 908 silver drachmae that I sent with someone from the place. Send me the medicine-chest and ask the doctor for a type of biting remedy and another much milder one. I pray that you are well.

WORDS AND TECHNICALITY

The competent, experienced hand and the specialized terminology employed by Horeion, make this papyrus particularly significant. Three terms deserve special attention as they point to different degrees of technicality: the noun *φαρμακοθήκη* and the juxtaposition between one *φάρμακον δακνηρόν* and another (*καὶ ἕτερον*) *ἡδύτερον*.

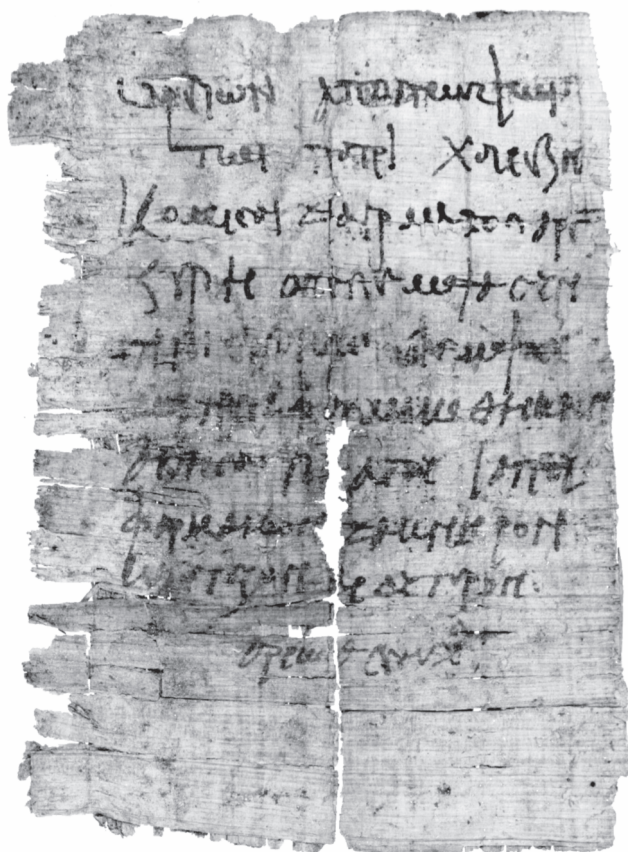
The term *φαρμακοθήκη* is a semantically transparent compound attested in Greek only in our papyrus, its earliest extant occurrence, and then

appears again in astronomical and Christian literature from the 5th century AD onwards. The word is mentioned within a forecast (καταρχή) concerning a sea-voyage, attributed to the 5th century astrologer Palchus and published in the *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum* (I 104, 29 Olivieri). The position of stars and constellations determines which artifacts are to be taken on board for the voyage. A ‘full’, ‘well-equipped’ first-aid kit, which is associated with the rise of the constellations Asclepius and Hygeia, is recorded among these objects (φαρμακοθήκην πεπληρωμένην διὰ τὸν Ἀσκληπιὸν καὶ Ὑγείαν).¹¹

The term occurs elsewhere exclusively in Christian writings from the 5th to the 13th century.¹² In most of the sources of Christian era, the com-

¹¹ Some lines before, the observation of Asclepius rising beside Selene makes the astrologist advise that medical equipment should be boarded (ll. 21–22: ἑωρακὼς δὲ ὅτι τῇ Σελήνῃ παρανατέλλει ὁ Ἀσκληπιὸς, εἶπον ὅτι καὶ ἱατρικὰ σκεύη φέρουσι μεθ’ ἑαυτῶν). So, it appears likely that φαρμακοθήκη forms part of the ἱατρικὰ σκεύη.

¹² The compound is attested eight times in four authors. Cf. Proclus, *Oratio XVIII in laudem apostoli Pauli* (PG LXV 817D–820A Migne) (5th cent. AD), where the author compiles a long list of things to which St. Paul’s *certamina* may metaphorically be compared, one of which is a φαρμακοθήκη, a term probably used because of its etymological transparency; [Hesychius?], *Homilia XXI in sanctum Lucam* 5, 8–9 (942, 4 Aubineau) (5th cent. AD), apocryphal homiletic text which in some manuscripts (BKLS) is ascribed to the presbyter and exegete Hesychius of Jerusalem but was probably written later, where St. Luke is presented as an itinerant doctor, a ψυχικὸς ἱατρός in metaphorical possession of a φαρμακοθήκη, sent to heal a morally ailing humanity: in this passage the case seems to be used for the storage and transport of surgical tools, as it is connected with the surgery symbolically practised on the tongues of the Jews, i.e. on the doctrines of Judaism; Sophronius, *Narratio miracolorum sanctorum Cyri et Joannis* 10, 56–57 (6th–7th cent. AD), where a woman, looking for a cure for her daughter suffering terrible pains at teething, dreams of meeting St. Cyrus in the guise of a monk. He orders her to drip whatever ingredient she may chance upon into the girl’s ears. She looks around, discovers a small niche (θυρίδα μικράν) – literally a ‘window’ – with a cup of honey which she uses as instructed, and thus relieving her daughter’s discomfort. The niche is described as ἀρμάριον, a ‘cupboard’ used as φαρμακοθήκη, a storage-space for medicines. This is in contrast with the other occurrences of the word, the φαρμακοθήκη being not a portable chest but a fixed built-in-cupboard used as storage space for remedies: the compound is thus used in a broader sense; Neophytus, *Πανηγυρικὴ βίβλος* II 5–6, III 234–236, XII 3, XVIII 38–40, XXVI 1081–1083 (12nd–13th cent. AD). In all these passages by Neophytus the saints – or the personified concepts – praised are presented according to the πνευματικὸς ἱατρός model equipped with a θεῖα φαρμακοθήκη containing divine medicines: having lost the connection with its actual object, the word seems to be employed for rhetorical effect, producing a *figura etymologica* in juxtaposition with φαρμάκων.



P. Oslo II 54r

pound denotes the professional's medicine-case, although in figurative contexts, *i.e.*, in passages where saints or personified concepts are presented according to the *πνευματικὸς ἰατρός* model, the 'spiritual physician', in metaphorical possession of a *φαρμακοθήκη* containing either medicaments or surgical tools. It should be stressed that the term is never used by medical authors which suggests that even if the *φαρμακοθήκη* is an exclusively medical container, *i.e.* a technical accessory, the word never

developed into a genuine *terminus technicus*.¹³ It probably served as early as the time of the Oslo papyrus as a lay synonym for the physician's medical bag, for use in practitioners' everyday conversations with their patients, in preference to the more official, technical terms for objects with a similar function used by professionals, such as *νάρθηξ*,¹⁴ a noun which is well known in literary sources, and explicitly defined *νάρθηξ ἰατρικός* by a literary papyrus containing alchemical recipes (PSI inv. 22011, 48 [MP³ 2000]).¹⁵ In this sense the compound *φαρμακοθήκη* could be placed at the

¹³ On difficulties and criteria for identifying the technical terms of a discipline, see D. R. LANGSLOW, *Medical Latin in the Roman Empire*, Oxford 2000, pp. 6–28 and relative bibliography. For medical items having both a lay designation and a technical name, see in particular pp. 16–22. Defining some features of the technical language Francesca SCHIRONI, 'Technical Languages: Science and Medicine', [in:] E. J. BAKKER (ed.), *A Companion to the Ancient Greek Language*, Oxford 2010, p. 338 states: 'technical terms often have lay synonyms in common language; this is particularly evident in medicine where technical and lay terminology coexist [...] and often physicians use the latter in order to be understood by the patients'.

¹⁴ It refers to a narrow cylindrical type of case, named after the *Ferula communis* (*νάρθηξ* in Greek), with the wood of which it was originally made. This name continued to indicate such cases even when made of other materials, and came to designate boxes with different shapes and functions. For a discussion on the term and for references to ancient sources and to the bibliography, see especially Marie-Hélène MARGANNE, 'Le médecin, la trousse et le livre dans le monde gréco-romain', [in:] M. CAPASSO (ed.), *Da Ercolano all'Egitto IV. Ricerche varie di Papirologia* [= *Papyrologica Lupiensia* 12], Galatina 2004, pp. 122–124 and Giulia GHIRETTI, *Luoghi e strumenti della professione medica antica. La testimonianza dei papiri greci d'Egitto*, Parma 2010, pp. 108–110 (see at the address <http://dspace-unipr.cilea.it/handle/1889/1493>).

¹⁵ Other less attested names of physician's cases are: *δελτάριον*, with this meaning only in *P. Oxy.* LIX 4001, 30–31 (for a discussion on the term and for references to ancient sources, see Isabella ANDORLINI, 'Il papiro di Strasburgo inv. G 90 e l'oftalmologia di Aezio', [in:] A. GARZYA (ed.), *Storia e ecdotica dei testi medici greci. Atti del II Convegno Internazionale, Parigi, 24–26 maggio 1994*, Naples 1996, pp. 7–8 [especially n. 5]; K. D. FISCHER, 'Was ist das *δελτάριον* in *P. Oxy.* LIX 4001?', [in:] Isabella ANDORLINI (ed.), 'Specimina' *per il Corpus dei Papiri Greci di Medicina. Atti dell'Incontro di studio, Firenze, 28–29 marzo 1996*, Florence 1997, pp. 109–113; Marie-Hélène MARGANNE, *Le livre médical dans le monde gréco-romain* [= *Cahiers du CEDOPAL* 3], Liège 2004, pp. 23–24 with bibliography, also pp. 31–33 [with n. 30] and pp. 38–40; EADEM, 'Le médecin, la trousse' [cit. n. 14], pp. 124–125; GHIRETTI, *Luoghi e strumenti* [cit. n. 14], pp. 104–108); *ἐγχειρίδιον*, a case – as the etymology suggests – suitable to be carried 'in the hand', likely similar in form to a *δελτάριον* (cf. MARGANNE, 'Le médecin, la trousse' [cit. n. 14], pp. 125–126); *πήρα*, listed in *GMP* II 10, 6–7 (= *P. Strasb.* Copte inv. 563, 6–7) *τὴν πήραν | τοῦ ἱατροῦ* with other medical instruments

intersection between the language of everyday life often documented in papyri and the technical vocabulary for medical instruments.

Furthermore, the linguistic history of *φαρμακοθήκη* testifies to the fact that words that appear to be extremely rare in the extant sources were, in all likelihood, more widespread than one might perceive nowadays, particularly in professional contexts.

The juxtaposition between one *φάρμακον δακνηρόν* and another *ἡδύτερον* at ll. 8–9 is significant. Our papyrus provides the only papyrological attestation of the adjective *δακνηρός*, ‘biting’ (*LSJ*⁹ 367 s.v.). In medical writings, however, it occurs four times as a technical term applied to eyesalves and ophthalmic preparations intended for application to the conjunctiva or the eyelids. Galen (*De comp. med. sec. loc.* IV 8 [XII 744, 12 K.]) shows a prescription for ‘biting ointments’ (*ἐπίχριστα δακνηρά*), cited with slight variations also by Aëtius (VII 99, 10 [CMG VIII 2, 343, 22 Olivieri]), and records the *μαλαβάθρινον*, a *kollyrion* prepared with cinnamon, among the (*ἐν*) *τοῖς δακνηροῖς κολλυρίοις* (*De comp. med. sec. loc.* IV 8 [XII 756, 14 K.]). Finally, *δακνηρόν πρὸς ὀξυδορκίαν* is the name of an external remedy for short-sightedness in Alexander of Tralles (II [II 43, 13 Puschmann]). By contrast, the adjective *ἡδύς* never appears in medical authors with reference to ophthalmic remedies. It expresses the sweetness of food and other substances,¹⁶ but may assume the sense of ‘mild’, or ‘soft’ when used as a qualifier for other preparations. This is the case for the ointment called *μυράκοπον* in Galen (*De comp. med. per gen.* VIII 16 [XIII 1054, 5 and 1058, 3 K.]). Terms usually attested in medical sources to identify the ‘delicate’, ‘non biting’ quality of an eyesalve are, e.g., *ἀπαλός*,¹⁷ *ἄδηκτος*¹⁸ and *τρυφερός*,¹⁹ the last one also in *P. Oxy.* LXXIV

and glossed with the word *ἐγχειρίδιον* by Ammon. *Diff.* 390, 2 (101, 5 Nickau), cf. MARGANNE, ‘Le médecin, la trousse’ (cit. n. 14), p. 126; Christelle FISCHER BOVET, ‘Letter requesting medical tools’, [in:] Isabella ANDORLINI (ed.), *Greek Medical Papyri II*, Florence 2009, pp. 163–164; GHIRETTI, *Luoghi e strumenti* (cit. n. 14), p. III.

¹⁶ Cf. e.g. Gal. *De alim. facult.* II 23 (VI 603, 1 K.), IV 12 and 29 (VI 679, 18 and 719, 2 K.), *In Hipp. Epid. VI comment.* VI 14 (XVIIb 272, 6 K.).

¹⁷ Cf. e.g. Paul. III 22, 26, 7 and VI 9, 1, 20 (CMG IX 1, 182, 11 and IX 2, 54, 4 Heiberg); Alex. Trall. II (II 41, 13 and 26 Puschmann).

¹⁸ Cf. e.g. Aët. VII 8, 15–6 and 9, 24 (CMG VIII 2, 260, 22–3 and 261, 24 Olivieri).

4977, 10 (2nd–3rd cent. AD [MP³ 2410.113; LDAB 119322]) *τρυφερὸν γάρ ἐστιν*, a recipe on papyrus for a *kollyrion* made with eggs (l. 3 *κολ(λύριον) τὸ διὰ τῶν ᾠῶν*). It may be assumed that *ῥδύς* is used in a generic sense in preference to a more precise, technical adjective. On the other hand, the comparative form points not to a complete antithesis, but rather to the different strengths of the remedies, so the choice of language can be considered quite specialized.

It is probable that the two *φάρμακα* of the Oslo papyrus represent unguents to be applied externally rather than pills or medicines for internal use, as suggested by the previous editors.²⁰

The pattern of juxtaposing a much harsher type of preparation with one of lesser strength is indeed common in the case of *kollyria*. A good parallel is to be seen in the terminological polarity between *collyria lenia* and *acria* in Latin medical authors.²¹ This pattern is also found in prescriptions on papyrus from Egypt. A remarkable example is *GMP* I 13 (= P. Berol. inv. 1944v [MP³ 2391.61; LDAB 4211]) dating back to the 3rd cent. AD, and more or less synchronous with the Oslo papyrus. The fragment preserves two recipes juxtaposing an *achariston* of greater potency with a milder one, made by reducing the number of ingredients.

The option of remedies of contrasting virtues suits very well the famous Hippocratic precept of ‘helping or at least not damaging’ (*Ep.* I 2, 5 [II 634, 8 – 636, 1 L.] *περὶ τὰ νοσήματα, δύο, ὠφελέειν, ἢ μὴ βλάπτειν*).

Remedies of contrasting strength were indeed prescribed for different conditions. Mild *kollyria*, for instance, were suitable for patients suffering from painful and chronic eye diseases,²² whereas more aggressive types such as the *acharista* – literally ‘the thankless’, because unpleas-

¹⁹ Cf. e.g. Gal. *Comp. med. sec. loc.* IV 8 (XII 757, 7 and 758, 5 K.).

²⁰ Commenting *ῥδύτερον* (p. 132 *ad l.*) it is said that ‘the effect might correspond to that of a bitter pill covered with sugar’.

²¹ See in particular Scrib. *Comp.* XIX – and XXVIII – (21, 4 and 25, 10 Sconocchia) and Cels. *Med.* VI 6, 2 (CML I 1, 261, 29–32 Marx). Cf. J. VOINOT, *Les cachets à collyres dans le monde romain*, Montagnac 1999, p. 42.

²² The *κολλύριον τὸ διὰ τῶν ᾠῶν* of the aforementioned *P. Oxy.* LXXIV 4977 is explicitly connected to established and chronic conditions (l. 9 *ποιεῖ δὲ πρ(ὸς) διαθέσεις*). See comm. pp. 81–83 with references.

ant when applied to the eyes – were considered unsuitable for chronic conditions.²³

Although the vocabulary employed by Horeion reflects different degrees of technicality, the use of accurate and rare terms reveals the writer's proficiency in the medical field.

LETTERS WITH MEDICAL CONTENT ON PAPYRUS

Private correspondence on papyrus occasionally carries information of medical content²⁴ and testifies to the practice of requesting medicines or pharmaceutical products when away from home. These requests are often introduced by the formula *πέμψον vel sim.* + (μοι) + name of the product(s). Medicinal salves of several types are frequently encountered since ophthalmic diseases were widespread in Egypt due to its hot, dry climate.²⁵ Some examples are provided by *ostraka* from Mons Claudianus. In one of these, *O. Claud.* II 220 (c. AD 137–145), a certain Psenpaapis asks his brother Gemellos to go to the doctor 'so that – he writes – he can give

²³ Galen, for example, referring to an *ἀχάριστον*, notes that *ὁπου δέ ἐστι περὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς διάθεσις, ἀπέχεσθαι δεῖ τοῦ κολλυρίου* (*Comp. med. sec. loc.* IV 8 [XII 750, 1–3 K.]).

²⁴ On this topic, see especially Isabella ANDORLINI, 'L'apporto dei papiri alla conoscenza della scienza medica antica', [in:] *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II 37.1 (1993), pp. 462–464, as well as EADEM, 'Prescription and practice in Greek medical papyri from Egypt', [in:] H. FROSCHAUER & Cornelia RÖMER (eds), *Zwischen Magie und Wissenschaft, Ärzte und Heilkunst in den Papyri aus Ägypten. Katalog der Ausstellung, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek*, Vienna 2007, p. 23 and 'Gli strumenti perduti di Galeno', *La torre di Babele* 8 (2012), pp. 37–44; Marie-Hélène MARGANNE, 'Étiquettes de médicaments, listes de drogues, prescriptions et réceptaires dans l'Égypte gréco-romaine et byzantine', [in:] F. COLLARD & Évelyne SAMAMA (eds), *Pharmacopoles et apothicaires. Les «pharmaciens» de l'Antiquité au Grand Siècle. IVe Rencontres sur l'histoire de la médecine, des pratiques et des représentations médicales dans les sociétés anciennes*, Troyes, 20–21 janvier 2006, Paris 2006, pp. 68–70; FISCHER BOVET, 'Letter requesting medical tools' (cit. n. 15), p. 158.

²⁵ Cf. ANDORLINI, 'Prescription and Practice' (cit. n. 24), p. 28 and Ann Ellis HANSON, 'Doctors' literacy and papyri of medical content', [in:] H. F. J. HORSTMANSHOFF (ed.), *Hippocrates and Medical Education. Selected Papers Read at the 12th Internationale Hippocrates Colloquium, Universiteit Leiden, 24–26 August 2005*, Leiden – Boston 2010, p. 200.

you the saffron and you can send it to me, because I have not yet received the medicinal *kollyria*...' (ll. 4–9 ὕπαγε πρὸς τὸν εἰατρὲν [I. ἱατρὸν] | ἵνα δώσι σοι τὴν κρό|κον κέ [I. καὶ] πέμψις μοι ἐπὶ | οὐπ' οὐ. ἐλάβα . . . κολλ|λοῖρια [I. κολλ|λύρια] ἱατρικᾷ).²⁶

Other letters testify to a professional context. In *P. Mert.* I 12 (AD 59, Oxyrhynchos or Hermopolis? [MP³ 2407])²⁷ the writer, Chairas, a physician, a druggist or an interested layman who is away from home for professional or personal reasons (l. 5 ἐν τῇ ἰδίᾳ), writes to his friend Dionysios, a doctor (*verso*, l. 1 Διονυσίῳ ἱατρῶι), about two versions of prescriptions for plasters that the latter has sent to him (l. 13 ἀντιγράφια [I. ἀντιγράφια] δέ μοι δύο ἔπεμψας). This letter, full of *termini tecnici* and technical expressions,²⁸ reflects the highly specialized level of the medical language among practitioners in the Egyptian *chora*.

Another two quite similar *specimina* provide examples of physicians dealing with medical matters. The first one, *P. Oxy.* LIX 4001 (late 4th cent. AD),²⁹ is a letter delivered by Eudaimon, a doctor working away from

²⁶ See also, e.g., *O. Claud.* I 171 (c. AD 100–120) with a request for a λουκύθιν (I. ληκύθιον) of rose oil and I 174 (beginning of the 2nd cent. AD), in which Isidorus asks his own two sons for some eyesalves and a ὑπανκόνιον (I. ὑπαγκώνιον), an 'elbow-cushion' (*LSJ*⁹ 1850 s.v.), because he suffers discomfort lying down.

²⁷ For a detailed discussion, see Isabella ANDORLINI, 'Il «gergo» grafico ed espressivo della ricetta medica antica', [in:] A. MARCONE (ed.), *Atti del Convegno Medicina e società nel mondo antico, Udine, 4–5 ottobre 2005* [= *Studi Udinesi sul Mondo Antico* 4], Florence 2006, pp. 153–158. See also HANSON, 'Doctors' literacy' (cit. n. 25), p. 191.

²⁸ According to Chairas, the recipe called 'of Archagathus' is properly compounded, but the other one intended 'to produce scarification' does not include the quantity of resin (ll. 15–17 ἡ μὲν Ἀρχαγαθίς [I. Ἀρχαγάθειος] ὑγιῶς | περιέχει, ἡ δὲ ἐλκωτικὴ ρητεινῆς [I. ῥήτινης] | συνσταθμίαν οὐ περιέχει). Then Chairas urgently asks for information about another strong plaster suitable for safely healing the soles of the feet (ll. 17–21: ἐρωτῶ | δὲ σε περὶ ἐλκωτικῆς γενναίας | δυναμένης ἀκινδύνως πέλματ(α) | ἐλκῶσαι: ... γ[ὰρ] [κ]ατ' ἀνάγκην | ἐπέγομαι). Finally, he requires the written prescription for a particular type of plaster classified as διαλυτική, 'dispelling', which belongs to the category of the σκληραί, i.e. plasters 'solid, hard to the touch', and ends this part of the letter mentioning the τετραφάρμακος, plaster *par excellence* (ll. 21–24: περὶ δὲ τῆς σκληρᾶς | ἔγραψας δύο γένη εἶναι. τὸ τῆς διαλυτικῆς μοι γραφίον [I. γραφεῖον] πέμψον· ἔστιν | γὰρ καὶ ἡ τετραφάρμακος σκληρά).

²⁹ For discussion, see ANDORLINI, 'Il papiro di Strasburgo inv. G 90' (cit. n. 15), pp. 7–15 and 'Gli strumenti perduti di Galeno' (cit. n. 24), pp. 243–244. See also FISCHER BOVET,

home, to his *ἰατρεῖον* presumably in Oxyrhynchos. He says to his addressees – his mother and other female relatives – that he received an *hydria* of ointments rather than the *hydria* of animal grease previously requested (ll. 22–24: ἔσχαμε(ν) | δὲ καὶ τὰ ἄλλα πάντα χωρὶς μόνῃς | τῆς υδρείας [Ι. υδρίας] τοῦ ὀξυγγείου [Ι. ὀξυγγίου] and ll. 28–30: παρέσχεν ἀντὶ τοῦ ὀξυγγείου [Ι. ὀξυγγίου] κολλουρίων υδρεῖ[αν] [Ι. υδρίαν]).³⁰ He also asks to be sent a set of implements which provide us with an exceptional example of the physician's *armamentarium*³¹ and of the specialized terms used to identify the related items, in particular a bronze doctor's bag – expressed by the words χα[λ]κοῦν δελτά[ριον] (ll. 30–31), which is the only attestation of this meaning –,³² containing the items necessary to make his own medical instruments (ll. 31–32 ἵνα ἄλλα ἄρμενα ποιήσω, μὴ τὰ αὐτά).³³

Likewise, in *GMP* II 10 (= P. Strasb. Copte inv. 563, late 6th/early 7th cent. AD, provenance unknown), a physician is making a request for medical implements, 'may be writing to his assistant, to another physician, or even to one of his family members able to gather all the tools', one of which is a doctor's bag, named *πήρα* (ll. 6–7 τὴν πήραν | τοῦ ἰατροῦ).³⁴

'Letter requesting medical tools' (cit. n. 15), p. 158 and HANSON, 'Doctors' literacy' (cit. n. 25), p. 191.

³⁰ It is noteworthy that this letter represents the only papyrological attestation of the vessel name *υδρία* employed in a medical context. The use of the *υδρία* as a pharmaceutical container is confirmed by two passages of medical authors referring to recipes for ointments, cf. Gal. *De comp. med. sec. loc.* I 2 (XII 437, 2–5 K.) and Paul. III 2, 2, 4–6 (CMG IX 1, 132, 19–21 Heiberg).

³¹ On this term and its meaning, see ANDORLINI, 'Gli strumenti perduti di Galeno' (cit. n. 24), pp. 239–240.

³² See *supra*, n. 15.

³³ Other requested tools and products are: a heater (l. 32 καὶ τὸν πυριατήρα), cupping vessels (l. 33 ὁμοίως καὶ τὰς σικύας) and three pounds of ready prepared *kollyria*, mixed (l. 35 ἀπόστειλον δὲ καὶ κολλουρίων λίτρας τρεῖς [Ι. τρεῖς] μεμιγμένων ἀπὸ πάντων) and astringent (l. 36 στατικά).

³⁴ For discussion, see FISCHER BOVET, 'Letter requesting medical tools' (cit. n. 15), pp. 163–164. For further bibliography see n. 15. The other implements requested are: a bandage (l. 2 τω οθωνι [Ι. τὸ ὀθόνιον]), a cyathus (l. 3 τὸ κνάθιον), a seal (ll. 4–5 τὸ τρω[χόεν] | σφραγίδιον), a scalpel (ll. 7–8 τὴν | σμίλην) and a wooden spoon (ll. 9–10 τὸ κοχλιάριον | ξυλικόν).

THE MAN BEHIND THE WORDS

The Oslo papyrus text also raises several intriguing questions. We might wonder who Horeion was. A literate layman interested in medicine, with a knowledge of specialist vocabulary? Or a person with healing skills, a would-be physician who is learning through an apprenticeship?³⁵ Or a small town doctor or a *pharmakopoles* in the business of compounding drugs? He clearly could not be a public-sector doctor or an experienced practitioner since he says at l. 7 ‘ask the doctor’.

I would envisage two possible interpretations of the purpose of the text. It may be that the remedies were prepared by the physician mentioned in the letter and resident in Oxyrhynchos, then sent on to Horeion in the *φαρμακοθήκη*.³⁶ Some prepared remedies are, for instance, Eudaimon’s *kollyria* in *P. Oxy.* LIX 4001 and the *φάρμακον* mentioned in *O. Claud.* II 222, 4 (AD 138–161).³⁷ We do not know whether the *φάρμακα* requested by Horeion were for personal use or whether he was simply an intermediary writing on behalf of somebody else.³⁸ In the first case, the lack of any mention of ingredients or therapeutic aim suggests that this was shared knowledge, *i.e.*, Apollonios knew what his son needed without any need for further explanation; Horeion may have habitually used these kinds of preparations. In either case, it seems likely that Horeion addressed his request to the physician resident in Oxyrhynchos because there was no properly equipped surgery in village where he was living.

³⁵ On doctors’ literacy in the papyri, see HANSON, ‘Doctors’ literacy’ (cit. n. 25), pp. 187–204. On the various kinds of practitioner in the Roman world, see R. P. J. JACKSON, ‘Roman medicine: the practitioners and their practices’, [in:] *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II 37.1 (1993), pp. 79–94.

³⁶ So, for example, in Marguerite HIRT RAJ, *Médecins et malades de l’Égypte romaine. Étude socio-légale de la profession médicale et de ses praticiens du 1er au 4e siècle ap. J.-C.* [= *Studies in Ancient Medicine* 32], Leiden 2006, p. 192: ‘un dénommé Horeion le prie de demander des remèdes au médecin et de les lui envoyer avec un coffret à pharmacie’.

³⁷ Cf. II. 3–6 *πέμ[ψον αὐτῷ φ]άρμακον ἐπὶ κι<ν>δν[νεύει διὰ] τῶν παρισθμίων | [οὐκ ἔθ]ελε γγράφιν (ἰ. γράφιον).*

³⁸ On medical consultations *par correspondance*, see Gal. *De loc. affect.* IV 2 (VIII 224, 7 – 225, 10 K.).

On the other hand, the word *φάρμακον* might conceal a reference to a prescription for diverse remedies and the portable *φαρμακοθήκη* might contain the pharmaceutical means and *materia medica* – substances and drugs – for their preparation. In this case, *φάρμακον* would have been used instead of *γραφή vel sim.*, meaning a single sheet of papyrus bearing the two recipes, as in the aforementioned *GMP* I 13 and in *P. Princ.* III 155 *recto* and *verso* (2nd–3rd cent. AD [MP³ 2379.2; LDAB 5134]), which can be interpreted as a *γραφή* with detailed instructions for the druggist.³⁹ Another aforementioned papyrus, *P. Mert.* I 12, testifies to this kind of exchange of correspondence between the author and the recipient of the letter. So, the expression αἰτήσας π[αρ]ὰ τοῦ ἱατροῦ | φάρμακον δακνηρόν | καὶ ἕτερον ἡδύτερον in *P. Oslo.* II 54, 7–9 could represent an abbreviated form of a longer structure such as αἰτήσας παρὰ τοῦ ἱατροῦ τὴν γραφὴν τοῦ φαρμάκου κτλ. This formulation may be attributed to Horeion and Apollonios' familiarity with the subject, resulting in a fairly tachygraphic way of expressing the idea. Although direct parallels of this use of *φάρμακον* are not attested, in *P. Mert.* I 12, 15–16 ἡ μὲν Ἀρχαγαθὶς (Ἰ. Ἀρχαγάθειος) [...] ἡ δὲ ἑλκωτική and ll. 17–18 ἐρωτῶ | δὲ σε περὶ ἑλκωτικῆς γενναίας there seems to be an implicit allusion to the 'prescription' for these plasters, since this kind of formulation is explicit in the previous lines referring to the δύο ἀντιγράφια, the 'two copies / versions of the recipes' (ll. 13–15 ἀντιγράφια [Ἰ. ἀντιγράφια] δέ μοι δύο ἔπεμψας. τὸ μὲν τῆς Ἀρχαγάθου [Ἰ. Ἀρχαγάθειου] τὸ δὲ τῆς ἑλκωτικῆς).

This interpretation would imply that Horeion was able to prepare his own remedies. He may have been a 'healer' in the 'private sector':⁴⁰ for instance a *pharmakopoles*, a druggist engaged in the preparation of *φάρμακα*,⁴¹ perhaps active in a commercial context like the *μυροπωλική*

³⁹ See ANDORLINI, 'Il «gergo» grafico' (cit. n. 27), p. 165.

⁴⁰ See JACKSON, 'Roman medicine' (cit. n. 35), pp. 84–87.

⁴¹ On the druggsellers in Rome, see J. KORPELA, 'Aromatarii, pharmacopolae, thurari et ceteri zur Sozialgeschichte Roms', [in:] P. J. VAN DER EIJK, H. F. G. HORSTMANSHOFF & P. H. SCHRIJVERS (eds), *Ancient Medicine in its Socio-Cultural Context, Leiden, 13–15 April 1992*, Amsterdam – Atlanta 1995, vol. I, pp. 101–111. See also G. PENSO, *La medicina romana. L'arte di Esculapio nell'antica Roma*, Saronno 1984, pp. 445–446.

καὶ ἀρωματικὴ ἐργασία mentioned in *P. Fay.* 93, 6–7 (AD 161, Ptolemais Euergetis),⁴² a papyrus which contains a lease of business in perfumery, or even an apprentice, a doctor-in-training away from home. Alternatively, Horeion might simply have been an interested layman ‘with a view toward self-medication’.⁴³ What is beyond doubt is that the specialist terminology he uses demonstrates not only his own level of literacy, but also his father’s – a man evidently able to understand and satisfy his son’s request. The aforementioned letter delivered by Eudaimon to his surgery (*P. Oxy.* LIX 4001) supports the hypothesis that is a professional family in Oxyrhynchos, and that Horeion could plausibly be a practitioner involved in the compounding of drugs.

A LEXICON ONLINE

Finally, thanks to the technical vocabulary which emerges even from private correspondence on papyrus, the term *φαρμακοθήκη* will be published as a lemma in the section ‘Containers’ of the interactive glossary *Medicalia Online*.⁴⁴ The goal of this project, funded by the European Research Council (ERC) and housed at the University of Parma in collaboration with Prof. Anastasia Maravela at the University of Oslo, is the development of a digital glossary of ancient medical terminology found in (para)literary and documentary papyri dealing with medical topics and sometimes unattested in other medical texts, as in the case of *P. Oslo II* 54. The glossary, presently under construction thanks to the help of Dr. Nicola Reggiani, is strictly connected to the ongoing research project *Corpus dei Papiri Greci di Medicina (CPGM) Online* [*Corpus of the Greek Medical Papyri Online*] led by Prof. Isabella Andorlini at the University of Parma. The aim of *CPGM Online* is to create a textual database of Greek

⁴² Cf. G. REGER, ‘The Manufacture and Distribution of Perfume’, [in:] Z. H. ARCHIBALD, J. K. DAVIES & V. GABRIELSEN (eds), *Making, Moving and Managing. The New World of Ancient Economies. 323–31 BC*, Oxford 2005, pp. 270–272.

⁴³ HANSON, ‘Doctors’ literacy’ (cit. n. 25), p. 199.

⁴⁴ See <http://www.papirologia.unipr.it/CPGM/glossary.html>.

papyri with medical content (about 300 items), including texts, descriptive information data (metadata), translations, line-by-line commentary, expandable bibliography and critical apparatus, in order to provide a comprehensive digital edition of the documents. As the vast majority of these papyri is not currently included in either literary or documentary databanks the project is of the utmost interest.⁴⁵ The ultimate objective is the creation of interactive links between the textual database *CPGM Online* and the glossary *Medicalia Online*, since the study of technical vocabulary, a major undertaking in the study of literary and papyrological sources, is expected to provide a better understanding of medical texts.

In the case of words denoting objects, like *φαρμακοθήκη*, the methodology is based on an interdisciplinary approach, a comparative study of all the evidence available – papyri, literary passages, inscriptions, archaeological artefacts, etc., in order to provide the broadest and the most complete overview of each *lemma*.

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⁴⁵ Cf. N. REGGIANI (2013), 'A *corpus* of literary papyri online: the pilot project of medical texts via SoSOL, [in:] 2. *Österreichischer Papyrologentag Alpen-Adria Universität Klagenfurt* (forthcoming). See <http://www.papirologia.unipr.it/CPGM/index.html>.