

# Gerhard Hansen - Service for Medicine in Reflecting Means Philately and Numismatics

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## Abstract

The article presents the results of the research concerning the study of representation in the means of philately and numismatics, stages of combating leprosy and scientists who devoted their lives to fighting this disease. An interesting informative and illustrative material is presented concerning the scientific feat of the Norwegian scientist Gerhard Hansen. As illustrations used philatelic and numismatic material from different countries. The article is of interest for doctors, medical workers of different directions, students and historians of medicine, collectors and a wide range of readers.

**Keywords:** gerhard hansen; leprosy; philately; postage stamps; envelopes; numismatics; commemorative medals

## Summary

The history of medicine knows many scientists from different medical and biological fields who devoted their scientific and practical activities to the fight against diseases that threaten humanity in different time periods. These serious diseases include leprosy (leprosy). This serious illness, leading to disability and death, has been repeatedly described in the Holy Books of the Bible, both in the Old and New Testaments. Among the heroes of medicine who devoted their lives to the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of this disease, one can safely include the Norwegian leprologist Gerhard Hansen [1; 2; 3; 4]. Before presenting to the reader the collection of philatelic material dedicated to the scientist, I would like to provide his brief biography. Gerhard Henrik Armauer Hansen, Norwegian leprologist, doctor honoris causa of the University of Copenhagen, corresponding member. Paris Medical Academy. famous for the discovery in 1873 and identification of the bacterium *Mycobacterium leprae* (after being stained by Albert Neisser) in 1880 as the microorganism that causes leprosy. Dates of the scientist's life (July 29, 1841-February 12, 1912) [1; 2; 3; 4].

In 1874, he described the causative agent of the disease *Bac. leprae* Hanseni (*Mycobacterium leprae*), and also studied the histomorphology

and clinical manifestations of the disease. In many countries of the world, to this day, leprosy is called Hansen's disease [1; 2; 3; 4]. A considerable number of various philatelic materials are dedicated to him. I would like to start presenting the life and scientific work of this scientist with postage stamps from different countries of the world, presented in Fig. 1 [5; 6; 7; 8]. Issue of postage stamps, incl. and on anniversary dates (100 years) associated with the discovery of the causative agent of the disease and/or the dates of the scientist's life - this is gratitude to the Norwegian scientist for his invaluable help in getting rid of leprosy [5; 6; 7; 8].

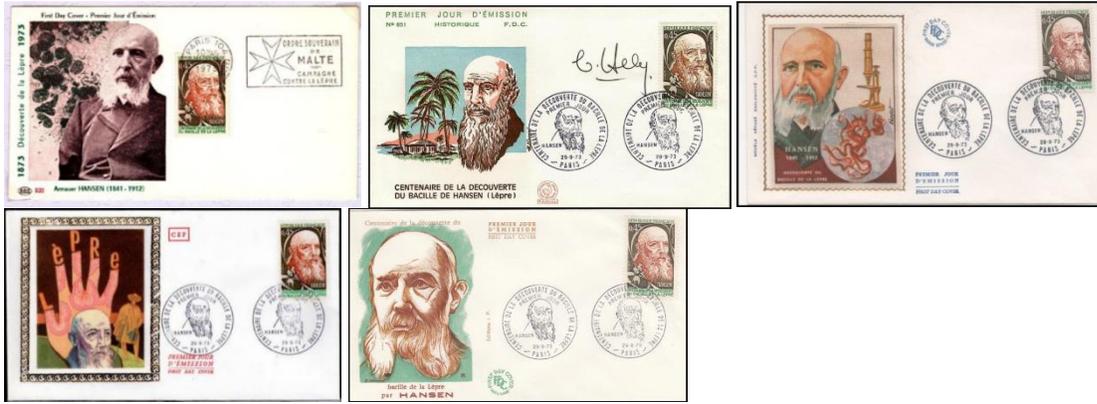
Leprosy was generally viewed as a hereditary or miasmatic disease. Hansen concluded from epidemiological studies that leprosy is a disease with a specific cause [1; 2; 3; 4]. Gerhard Hansen, author of more than 50 scientific papers devoted to the etiology, pathogenesis, clinical picture and epidemiology of leprosy [1; 2; 3; 4]. In 1872, he refuted the then dominant concept of hereditary transmission of leprosy and substantiated the doctrine of the contagiousness of the disease. In total there are 24 postage stamps from different countries of the world.



Figure 1. Gerhard Hansen on world postage stamps

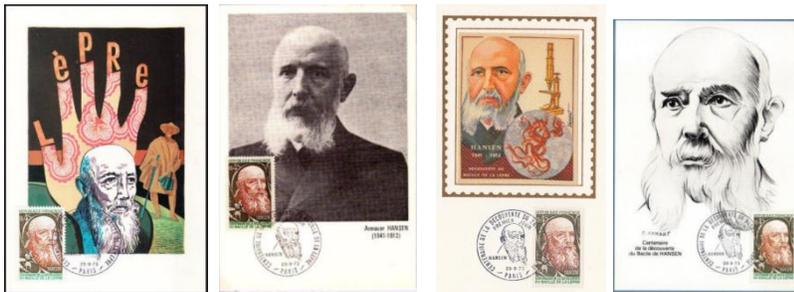
Also, there is a number of first day postal envelopes - 11 copies, with postage stamps, images and special cancellation seals, dedicated to the Norwegian scientist who devoted his life to the fight against leprosy. Some of these envelopes, issued by the postal departments of Laos, India, the Republic of Dahomey, France, mainly for the 100th anniversary of the discovery of the causative agent of leprosy (leprosy), are presented in Fig. 2 [5; 6; 7; 8].





**Figure 2:** Конверты (КПД), посвящённые Герхарду Хансену

Figure 3 shows maps of France dedicated to the memory of G. Hansen in the fight against leprosy [5; 6; 7; 8].



**Figure 3:** Cards Maximus of France dedicated to Gerhard Hansen

There are also philatelic materials from a number of countries (postage stamps and blocks), on which Gerhard Hansen is depicted along with other heroes in the fight against leprosy. Thus, on the postage stamp of Mali and the postal block of Djibouti, Gerhard Hansen is depicted together with the French leprologist scientist Raoul Fallero [5; 6; 7]. And

on the postal block, a portrait of G. Hansen is presented together with a portrait of the famous Father Damian, who devoted his life to serving people with leprosy in the leper colony of Molokai, on the Hawaiian Islands. These philatelic materials are presented in Fig. 4 [5; 6; 7].



**Figure 4:** Philatelic materials from a number of countries dedicated to the heroes of the fight against leprosy

I would also like to present tabletop commemorative medals dedicated to Gerhard Hansen. As is known, tabletop commemorative medals belong to numismatics [9]. If you look at the definitions of the concept “table medal”, it is easy to see some duality in it. That is, on the one hand, it can be classified as commemorative and commemorative coins, on the other hand, it can be classified directly as medals [9]. In general, the most acceptable definition characterizes a table medal as a memorial sign that is made in honor of a significant event or an outstanding figure. Actually, a tabletop medal differs from a regular one, first of all, in the absence of fasteners, which gives it a significant resemblance to a coin [9].

In Fig. 5. Three tabletop commemorative medals dedicated to Gerhard Hansen are presented [10; 11; 12; 13]. In Fig. 5a, presents a silver, gilt medal (obverse and reverse), which was sponsored for issue, in 1973, by the Tenth International Congress against Leprosy, in honor of Dr. Gerhard Hansen, on the 100th anniversary of the discovery of the pathogen by the scientist leprosy, in 1873. On the obverse of this commemorative medal, G. Hansen is shown working with a microscope in his study, surrounded by the inscription “Gerhard Henrik Armauer Hansen (1841-1912)” and

“G.H. ARMAUER HANSEN INVENTOR BACILLI LEPRAE 1873-1973” [10]. On

the back of the medal (reverse) is the inscription “HOSPITALIS SANCTI GEORGI / BERGENSIS NORVEGIAE 1411”, and the image shows the George Hospital in Bergen, Norway, where Dr. G. Hansen worked for many years studying leprosy and methods of combating it [10].

In Fig. 5 b, a German copper commemorative medal is presented, issued by the German Association for the Fight against Leprosy (leprosy), in honor of the 100th anniversary of the scientist’s discovery of the causative agent of leprosy, with a portrait of the scientist on its obverse, and an inscription in German on the reverse of the medal “In the fight against leprosy (leprosy)” [11]. In Fig. 5 c, presents a Norwegian commemorative bronze medal. The obverse features a portrait of the scientist in profile, facing left, his full name and surname, and the dates of his life “Gerhard Henrik Armauer Hansen (1841-1912)” [12]. On the reverse of the medal there is a small seal of the Royal Norwegian Scientific Society and an inscription about this in Norwegian “Det lille seglet til Det Kongelige Norske Videnskabers Selskab” [12; 13].



**Figure 5a-c:** Commemorative medals issued in honor of Gerhard Hansen

This article is the first part of a series of materials devoted to the reflection of research and treatment of leprosy in collectibles. The next article will present collection materials and a description of the contribution of the Frenchman Raoul Follero in the fight against leprosy.

## Conclusions

1. Summarizing the presented presentation of collectibles dedicated to the fight against leprosy, I would like to note that the variety of different types of collectibles, as material assets from different time periods, is a creative way to study and present the history of medicine and biology.

2. The variety of collectibles presented clearly illustrates Gerhard Hansen's contribution to the fight against leprosy.

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