

## **The ancient history of dementia**

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Ancient Greek, Roman and Byzantine medical or medico-philosophical literature treats a vast variety of subjects relating to the early history of medical entities. Only a few are positively identified and matched to modern nosological entities, such as epilepsy or cancer. Nevertheless, bearing in mind that after Hippocrates, medical authors offer detailed descriptions of symptoms, clinical manifestations, prognosis and therapeutic methods, one may be lead to assumptions about possible connotations between ancient and modern diseases. Such is the case with dementia; under the terms “morosis”, “moria”, “anoia”, or simply with the description of “an” illness, the ancient testimonies provide us with etiological factors, clinical manifestations, and prognosis of what we could possibly identify as modern types of dementia. The texts studied (medico-philosophical or literary) date back to the Pythagorean philosophers (~6<sup>th</sup> c. BC) up to Byzantine medical authors of the 13<sup>th</sup> century AD, shedding light to the evolution of the relation between the brain and the medical entity studied and to the way the physicians regarded “dementia” initially as a result of ageing and later as an illness per se.