Pediatric field encompasses a medical branch that deals with the medical care of infants, children, and new adolescents. Patients in this field are generally from birth up to 18 years of age. Although the field is known as a new medical branch, the history dates back to over thousand year ago [1]. A main part of the medical and pharmaceutical manuscripts of Persian medicine is related to the field of pediatrics and allied diseases. During current decades, large progress has been achieved in this field. However, medieval experiences and complementary findings are still helpful for the pediatricians. Scholars of traditional Persian medicine such as Rhazes, Avicenna, and Haly Abbas have had deep impact on the development of medical knowledge, as well as pediatric sciences [2–4]. Rhazes (865–925 A.D.), also known as Muhammad ibn Zakariyā Rāzī, is surely known as one of the most prominent medical scientists of the Islamic golden age [5]. He was born in Ray, near the modern Tehran. More than 200 books and treatises in different fields such as medicine, astronomy, alchemy, philosophy, and pharmacy are attributed to Rhazes [6]. He is also known with his comprehensive medical encyclopedia, Liber Continens or Kitab-al-Hawi [7]. Rhazes is the first person who has meticulously described and differentiated the signs and symptoms of smallpox from measles [8]. In addition to his main books, he has published a short treatise on diseases in pediatrics, entitled “A treatise on pediatric diseases” or “Risāla fi amrāz al-atfāl wa ‘l-‘īnaya bihim” [9]. It is reported that the treatise is the first distinct book written about pediatric diseases. The book has been translated into Hebraic, Latin, German, and Italian. Finally Dr. Samuel Rabdill prepared and published a novel English translation of this book [10]. The repeating translations of the book show the importance of the treatise and usefulness of the contents.

Bibliographically, this treatise contains 24 chapters. In the beginning chapter, Rhazes described the infants’ sores, which are spread on the head and face. Here, he has recommended a modification protocol in the diet during breast feeding period. Rhazes also specified the application of some simple topical remedies to manage the disorder. In the second chapter, he advised the using of specific oil samples to treat the itch. Pediatric hydrocephaly is the topic of the third chapter; therein Rhazes mentioned the etiology and enlargement of the head size by reforming the diet and lactation. He has explained tympanites in the forth chapter and subsequently introduced the administration of topical dosage forms containing saffron and aloe. In the fifth chapter, he described the sneezing and related management using rosa and common purslane. In the sixth chapter, he has discussed insomnia and related reasons such as low quality of milk intake during the first year of life.
life. He recommended the application of topical preparations of opium and saffron for this disorder. Two following chapters have dealt with the epilepsy in two types, the congenital and the acquired. In the former type, modification of diet was considered useful. In the latter, leech therapy has been recommended. Chapters nine and ten are about diseases of the ears. To manage such ailments, some remedies such as saffron in water or in vinegar has been recommended in the form of ear drop. In chapter eleven, Rhazes has described the ophthalmic diseases in pediatrics and has administered some herbs as rosa and aloe. In the next chapter, he described the etiology and treatment of heterotopias. In chapters thirteen and fourteen, oral disease and pain of teeth growing have been mentioned. According to his recommendation, massaging the gingiva with olive oil or topical application of chamomile oil on the head of the baby may be beneficial to reduce the pain. In chapters fifteen to eighteen, common gastrointestinal disorders such as vomiting, diarrhea, constipation and worms have been recorded. Rhazes also remarked cough in children and administered quince and sweet pomegranate as useful remedies. In the next chapter, purities and attrition were mentioned. He believed that putting the child in warm water may decrease purities before application of topical rosa oil. In chapters twenty-one to twenty-four, inflammations, umbilical protrusion, poliomyelitis, hernia and urethral stone were discussed sequentially. Undoubtedly, Rhazes is one of the first pioneers in pediatrics and the current book is a very early documented contribution of Rhazes to the field of pediatrics. Regardless of the vast progress made in this field, Rhazes’s viewpoints on pediatric and respective remedies can still be considered as new approaches to be applied in contemporary pediatric medicine.

Competing interests

The authors declare there is no competing interest.

REFERENCES


