## Aviad Recht: Plans for Future Research

The topic that interests me now most of all is the history and development of the theory of the four humors, starting in Greece and Rome, through its branching into the Iranian and Muslim spheres and back to Christian Europe.

The theory of the four humors is a case study for the phenomenon in which a new medical theory spreads to neighboring geographical spheres, takes hold in new cultures, and from there continues its spread onwards.

It is known that as opposed to the conservative approach to the theory in its region of origin (Greece, Rome and the Byzantine Empire), when it arrived in new cultural areas (the Near East, for example) a variety of dynamics occurred that represent a range of responses to this new idea.

I am especially interested in the encounter between the theory of humors and Sassanian culture, and subsequently with Muslim culture. In these cultures, we find a range of responses including rejection, adaptation, and acceptance.

These processes led to the enhancement of the theory as compared to the conservative approach adopted in Byzantium. These processes also have a Jewish connection – it appears to be the case that Assaf’s Book of Medicines (the first Jewish medical treatise) made a significant contribution to this process, in its journey that crossed continents and cultures.

The result of this development is that the four humors theory presented in many medical works from the Sassanian sphere and subsequently the Muslim sphere has a “different” structure of the four humors, a phenomenon which scholarship has yet to explore.

This story can be an instructive example of the evolution of a medical idea—the theory of the four humors became the dominant one. It was the undisputed theory, nearly sanctified, in an array of cultures, nations and areas for thousands of years, while undergoing developments and enhancements. The Renaissance introduced new ways of observing the human body and new understandings of the nature of medicine, and the acceptance of the celebrated four humors theory unraveled, and the theory faded in popularity, until it was entirely abandoned.