

In 1995 a section of a Roman cemetery was discovered fortuitously when electricity and telephone cables as well as water pipes were being laid just to the south of modern Mérida, in Roman times the colony of Augusta Emerita, capital of the Roman province of Lusitania. An inscribed marble plaque came to light, reused in one of the burials dating to the later Roman Empire. Despite its discovery in a funerary context, the inscription appears not to be an epitaph, but rather an honorific inscription set up to honour a local doctor (*medicus*) of servile status. It was dedicated by another slave who describes himself as a pupil (*discens*) of the doctor. Thanks to the rare name of this student's owner, we are able to identify him as the slave of a leading family of servile origin from Roman Olisipo (Lisbon) from the mid-first century A.D. His master was C. Heius Primus, a freedman and prominent Augustalis at the port-city of Olisipo, who is known to have repaired and embellished the *proscenium* and *orchestra* of Olisipo's theatre in A.D. 57 (*CIL* II 183 = *ILS* 5640; *AE* 1997, 773), where he was later honoured with a statue in recognition of his acts of euergetism (*CIL* II 196).

The aim of this paper is to publish for the first time the text of this new inscription from Emerita and to discuss its importance for our understanding of medical practitioners and medical training in Roman Spain, building on the earlier work of B. Rémy (*REA*, 93, 1991, 321-364). It confirms the importance of Augusta Emerita as a medical centre, where six other *medici* are already attested epigraphically (a high concentration for a provincial city) and a number of caches of medical instruments have come to light from the Roman period. But it also provides the first attestation from anywhere in the Latin-speaking parts of the Roman Empire of a medical student (*discens*) honouring his teacher and hence the first direct epigraphic attestation of a doctor taking on students as a means of disseminating medical knowledge in the Roman west. The fact that one of his students came from a city 200 km to the west suggests that he personally had already established an important reputation as a doctor and the colony of Emerita was already seen as a leading medical centre of Roman Spain by the mid-first century A.D. Its status as a flourishing Roman colony and as the major Roman administrative centre of the province of Lusitania may help to explain why it attracted a number of doctors (one of the other *medici* so far attested at Emerita, the eye-doctor Q. Aponius Rusticus, was an immigrant from Corduba: *AE* 1994, 840) and why it may have developed as a centre of medical training. The paper thus makes a contribution to the ongoing discussion of the social status of doctors and the ways in which medical knowledge was disseminated in the Roman world in general.