The Ebers papyrus (Figure 1), dating about 1550 BC, is the first known description of the signs and symptoms of diabetes mellitus associated to a series of remedies to combat the typical polyuria. The term ‘diabetes’ was coined some centuries after by Aretaeus of Cappadocia (81-138) (Figure 2), with the significance of ‘to pass through’ with reference to the peculiar polyuria of the diabetic patients, attributed by Galen (130-200 AC) (Figure 3) to the kidney’s weakness.

The famous medieval physicians Ibn Sina or Avicenna (980-1037) (Figure 4) and Maimonides Moshe ben Maimon (1135-1204) (Figure 5) suggested other possible aetiopathogenesis.

In the 18th century, Herman Boerhaave (1668-1738) (Figure 6) and Louis Jacques Thénard (1777-1857) (Figure 7) pointed out the correlation between hyperglycaemia and polyuria.