In the final years of the thirteenth century, at the height of the process of the “medicalization” of society, the development of civil and canon law made it possible to use doctors to provide evidence in some civil and criminal trials. The doctor, physician or surgeon, and other medical practitioners (barbers and midwives) gave evidence on the gravity of an injury or the prognosis of the victim in order to establish the innocence or guilt of an individual in such particularly complex circumstances as wounds. They also gave opinions on the causes of violent death, on pregnancies in rape victims, on the annulment of a marriage on the grounds of the husband's impotency and on a growing list of cases that gradually came into their fields of competence. Indeed, Justinian's *Corpus Iuris Civilis* (529–534), Gratian’s *Decretum* (c. 1140) and the various collections of papal letters, known as the Decretals (particularly those in the compilation of Raymond of Peñafort in 1234), underlined the relevance of the expert testimonies of members of the medical profession. These legislative traditions, based on Roman Law, incorporated the idea that judges could investigate crimes and reach a verdict on the basis of evidence collected and examined, including that given at trial and the conclusions offered in written submissions. Over time, some jurists came to see this expert...
testimony as positive.\(^3\) Undoubtedly, the epistemological similarities between doctors and jurists and their social assimilation facilitated the participation of the former in the courts of law and the trust afforded by the latter to medical experience.\(^4\)

Among the activities of doctors in the courts, one in particular stood out: the examination and assessment of wounds. There were two focal points for the development of the practice on mainland Europe: France and northern Italy. It subsequently spread across the rest of the continent. In France, it appears that the Bishops of Maine and Anjou had relied on the assistance of medical experts since the eleventh century, and the practice was in evidence in Paris the following century.\(^5\) In 1260, Louis IX suppressed trial by ordeal and/or combat and replaced them with written testimonies, which opened the way to the use of medical evidence. Successive kings then definitively established the role of surgeons, physicians and midwives in the law courts. At the same time, the procedure was also adopted in Montpellier, where there was an important faculty of medicine and a remarkable interest in surgery.\(^6\) In this period the city belonged to the Crown of Aragon, under the rule of Jaime I, who appointed two surgeons to make expert examinations of wounds.\(^7\) Expert reports had also been introduced in Provence in about 1258, and a study has

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5 Watson, *Forensic Medicine*, pp. 32–33. The first references to surgery in Paris (1261–1270) have to do with a requirement introduced by the provost of the city, whereby surgeons would be required to testify in the courts on the wounds of their patients. Danielle Jacquot, *La médecine médiévale dans le cadre parisien. XIVᵉ–XVe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 1998), p. 23.
