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Paper: “Cassiodorus and Ancient Medicine: From Institutional Patronage to the Birth of Western Monastic Medicine: Was Cassiodorus a Physician?”

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Peer review:

Reviewer 1: Claudia Pisoschi
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Josip J. Strossmayer University, Croatia

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Reviewer Name: Claudia Pisoschi	
University, Country: University of Craiova, Romania	
Date Manuscript Received: August 31, 2026	Date Review Report Submitted: September 1, 2026
Manuscript Title: Cassiodorus and Ancient Medicine: From Institutional Patronage to the Birth of Western Monastic Medicine. Was Cassiodorus a Physician?	
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Evaluation Criteria:

Please give each evaluation item a numeric rating on a 5-point scale, along with a thorough explanation for each point rating.

Questions	Rating Result [Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]
1. The title is clear, and it is adequate for the content of the article.	5
<i>(Please insert your comments)</i> The title fully corresponds to the content of the paper and it is quite clear.	
2. The abstract presents objectives, methods, and results.	5
<i>(Please insert your comments)</i> The abstract is adequate: it includes the main information representing the premises, states the objectives of the paper, and the conclusion reached.	
3. There are a few grammatical errors and spelling mistakes in this article.	5
<i>(Please insert your comments)</i> We suggest the use of the lexeme <i>success</i> instead of <i>fortune</i> throughout the paper. Please check the citation on page 1, paragraph 2 (neither a physician [nor a monk]). Please replace hyphens by dashes throughout the text (pages 2-4).	
4. The study methods are explained clearly.	5
<i>(Please insert your comments)</i> The type of analysis proposed by the author is clearly stated.	
5. The results are clear and do not contain errors.	5
<i>(Please insert your comments)</i> The results are represented by the conclusion, since the paper is a review paper.	
6. The conclusions or summary are accurate and supported by the content.	5
<i>(Please insert your comments)</i> The conclusion is clearly expressed and fully argued by the content of the chapters.	
7. The references are comprehensive and appropriate.	5
<i>(Please insert your comments)</i> The references are appropriate and correctly cited. Nevertheless, please consider inserting the pages in the case of the citations in chapter 2 paragraph 1 (Momigliano 1978, Focà 2020), chapter 3, paragraphs 1 and 2 (Momigliano 1978) and chapter 5, paragraph 2 (Momigliano 1978).	

Overall Recommendation (mark an X with your recommendation) :

Accepted, no revision needed	
Accepted, minor revision needed	x
Return for major revision and resubmission	
Reject	

Comments and Suggestions to the Author(s):

The paper is extremely useful for the correct perception of *Cassiodorus* by both professionals and non-professionals, the discussion of the information provided by the sources cited being thorough, interesting and comprehensive. The conclusion offers a correct and necessary clarification, to be considered by any further studies on *Cassiodorus*.

Comments and Suggestions to the Editors Only:

Reviewer A:
Recommendation: Revisions Required

The TITLE is clear and it is adequate to the content of the article.

Content in relation to the topic — very good. The article delivers what its title and stated aim promise: the thesis is clearly stated, consistently developed and confirmed in the conclusion. The four-chapter structure follows the announced trajectory logically. The argument is balanced — it avoids both hagiography and reductionism, separates the question of monastic status from that of the medical profession, and rightly warns against the overinterpretation found in celebratory regional literature.

The ABSTRACT clearly presents objectives, methods, results, and conclusions.

Abstract, structure and language — good, with minor issues. The abstract is substantive and informative, the keywords appropriate, and the language is of a high academic standard. Formally: chapter 1 is unnumbered whereas 2–4 are numbered (to be harmonised); headings are not set with heading styles. Notes: the article uses APA in-text citation — if the journal requires discursive footnotes, this should be aligned with the journal's style.

There are a few grammatical errors and spelling mistakes in this article.

Language is academic- no revision needed.

The study METHODS are explained clearly.

The method (historical-critical, distinguishing the institutional, bibliographical and historiographical planes) is clearly set out. However, the author explicitly states that the primary sources (Variae, Institutiones) were not consulted in their critical editions but through transcriptions and translations in the secondary literature. This is candidly acknowledged, but it undercuts the abstract's claim of a "critical reading of the Cassiodorian sources": the reading is in fact mediated and second-hand.

The results are clear and do not contain errors.

As a finding, the conclusion is largely confirmatory rather than novel: it essentially restates and endorses the verdict already reached by Russo in 1962 ("a competent expert and a great patron"), refined with Momigliano's philological caution. The paper therefore contributes systematisation, framing and a more disciplined vocabulary, but not a new interpretation or new evidence. Two of the potentially more interesting results — the significance of the Vivarium medical corpus and the line of transmission toward the Salernitan school — remain asserted or explicitly hedged: the

Salernitan continuity is, by the author's own admission, "plausible cultural continuity" rather than documented filiation, and the importance of the library is affirmed on the authority of Focà rather than demonstrated through independent analysis. Crucially, because the primary sources (the *Variae* and *Institutiones*) were consulted only second-hand, the conclusion's more emphatic claims (e.g. that this is "the most accurate formula," or that Cassiodorus holds "a place of the first importance") rest on a narrow, mediated evidentiary base and cannot be independently verified from within the article.

The CONCLUSION or summary is accurate and supported by the content.

The conclusion is coherent, balanced and well-argued, and it answers the research question convincingly at the level of reasoning; but as a research result it is confirmatory and its authority is constrained by the thin, dated and second-hand source base. I would ask the author to (a) state explicitly what is genuinely new relative to Russo and Momigliano, (b) ground the key claims in the primary sources in their critical editions, and (c) add a brief statement of limitations and of directions for further research, since the article currently has no distinct results/discussion delineation.

The list of REFERENCES is comprehensive and appropriate.

Only five references, of which three are substantive; *MediterraneiNews* is a journalistic source, and Sassoli (2025) is an unpublished dissertation that does not address the medical theme. Current international scholarship on Cassiodorus (critical editions of the *Institutiones/Variae*, e.g. Mynors/Fridh; monographic studies) and general histories of early-medieval medicine are missing.

Please rate the TITLE of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

5

Please rate the ABSTRACT of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

4

Please rate the LANGUAGE of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

4

Please rate the METHODS of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

3

Please rate the RESULTS of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

5

Please rate the CONCLUSION of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

4

Please rate the REFERENCES of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

2

Overall Recommendation!!!

Accepted, minor revision needed

Comments and Suggestions to the Author(s):

– Consult the primary sources (Variae, Institutiones) in their critical editions and cite them directly rather than through the secondary literature.

- Substantially expand and update the bibliography — include current international scholarship on Cassiodorus and Vivarium and general histories of early-medieval/monastic medicine.
- State the article’s own contribution more clearly in relation to Russo, Momigliano and Focà (what is new relative to the existing assessment).
- Harmonise chapter numbering and heading formatting, and align the citation style (footnotes/APA) with the journal’s guidelines.
- Maintain the (commendable) critical distance from celebratory regional literature and avoid the formula “physician-monk” outside quotation marks.
