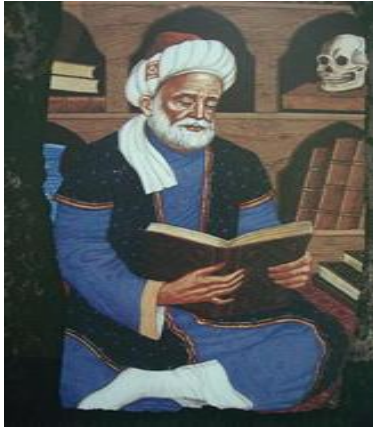


Abu Qasim Khalaf Ibn Abbas Al Zahrawi (Albucasis or Zahravius)



Abu al Qasim al Zahrawi was a man ahead of his time, known as the father of operative surgery. He invented over 200 surgical tools in the 11th Century, which saved millions of lives. He was born in 936 AD in Al-Zahra, a suburb, six miles northwest of Cordoba, the capital of Muslim Spain (Al-Andalu). Al-Zahrawi spent most of his life in his hometown as a practicing physician-pharmacist-surgeon. He served as the court physician to Caliph Al-Hakam-II, during a period considered the “Golden Age” of Arab Spain when natural and mathematical sciences reached their peak. Around the year 1000 AD, he wrote his famous book “Al Tasreef Liman ‘Ajaz ‘Aan Al-Taleef”, (The Clearance of Medical Science for Those Who Can Not Compile It). The book was the summation of about fifty years of medical education, training, practice, and experience. In addition to sections on medicine and surgery, there were sections on midwifery,

pharmacology, therapeutics, psychotherapy, weights and measures, and medical chemistry. In Al-Tasreef, three chapters were devoted to surgery. Some of the procedures and techniques detailed in these chapters include procedures like surgery of the eye, ear, nose, and throat, tonsillectomy, tracheostomy, thyroidectomy, nasal polyp removal, ligature application and internal stitching utilizing catgut, approximation of dislocated and fractured bones and removal of urinary bladder calculi.

He invented instruments like Instruments for internal examination of the ear and instruments for removal or insertion of objects into the throat.

He described the exposure and division of the temporal artery to relieve certain types of headaches. He utilized cauterization to treat skin tumors. He preceded the famous French military surgeon Ambroise Pare (1510-1590), claimed to be the first European to utilize sutures. He gave treatment for anal fistulas. He is credited to be the first to describe an ectopic pregnancy. He devised several dental devices and artificial teeth made of animal bones.

Al Zahrawi contributed to neurosurgical diagnoses and treatment including management of head injuries, skull fractures, spinal injuries, dislocations, hydrocephalus, subdural effusions, headache.

He made significant contributions to pediatric surgery. He described hydrocephalus, harelip, adenoids, ranula, imperforated external urinary meatus, perforated anus, hermaphrodites, gynecomastia, supernumerary and webbed fingers. He was the first to describe in detail the medical aspects of hemophilia.

His medical writings were highly regarded in the West after being translated by Gerard of Cremona, Rogerius Frugardi, Ronaldus Parmensis, and others. Al-Tasreef was an essential component of the medical curriculum in European countries for many centuries. The famous French surgeon Guy de Chauliac (1300-1368) quoted him over 200 times in his book on surgery. Several editions of this book (surgical chapters) were published including one in Venice (1497), at Basel (1541), and at Oxford (1778).

Finally, he emphasized child education and behavior, school curriculum, and academic specialization.

After a long and distinguished medical career, he died in 1013 AD at the age of 77 years.

Prof. Dr. Asma Irfan

Editor-in-Chief, Students Spectrum

Chairperson, IRB