Giants who founded modern medicine!

Abu Marwan Abd Al-Malik Ibn Zuhr (Avenzoar)

(1091-1161 C.E.)

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(Disclaimer: Compilation of his account is based on various sources and it’s not an original research article. References and sources are given at the end. We are grateful to the original writers for their valuable work)

Modern Islam beginning with Quran and the final Prophet Muhammad ﷺ ushered the new horizons of modern sciences and medicine! It took the sciences out of Greek myths into real life with missile speed. The seeds implanted by the Quran and the final Prophet Muhammad ﷺ soon bore fruits as Islam provided the required soil of tranquility, truth, courage, generosity, sincerity, hard work and humanity for healthiest growth of science. As a result big ban occurred not only in field of exact and natural sciences but almost in all fields! Soon numerous stars or giants were born in every field. We then see great names like Jabir bin Hayan, Ibn-e-Sina (Avisina), ar-Razi, Ibn Rushd and Ibn Haytham. One of these giants in medicine, surgery and pathology was Ibn Zuhr. In West his name was distorted variably to Avenzoar, Abumeron, Abhomeron, Alomehón or Abhomjeron.

He lived and practiced in Ishbiliya (modern-day Seville, Andalucia, Spain) between 1091-1162 CE. He was the great grand father of medical family over six generations where not only his sons and grandsons but daughters and grand daughters were great physicians.

His name was Latinized as Avenzoar, Abumeron, Abhomeron, Alomehón or Abhomjeron. Ibn Zuhr in contrast to other great Muslim scientists focussed only on medicine. His most fundamental contributions included;

1. Surgical procedures on animals before touching patients
2. Testing of medicines
3. Autopsies on animals and human beings to learn detailed anatomy
4. Insertion of gastrointestinal tubes for feeding patients who couldn’t take food by mouth
5. Introduction of tracheostomies; first on goats
6. Began structured residency program in Surgery. He insisted on a well supervised and structured training program for the surgeon-to-be, before allowing him to operate independently. He also drew the red lines at which a physician should stop, during his general management of a surgical condition; a step forward in the evolution of general surgery as a specialty of its own
7. Drew redlines and limits which must not be crossed by trainees for safe surgery
8. Prevention of urinary stones through diet
9. Description of many diseases for the first time including;
   a. Scabies
   b. Mediastinal tumors
   c. Carcinoma of stomach and esophagus
d. intestinal tuberculosis
e. inflammation of middle ear
f. pericarditis

Ibn Zuhr wrote several monumental books for physicians and for the common people. His books were translated into Latin and Hebrew and were quite popular in Europe until the late Eighteenth century. Only three of his great books have survived.

✦ Ibn Zuhr’s Kitab al-Taisir fi al-Mudawat wa al-Tadbir (‘The Book of Simplification concerning Therapeutics and Diet) discusses pathological conditions and therapy in detail.

✦ His book Kitab al-Iqtisad fi Islah Al-Anfus wa al-Ajsad (‘Book of the Middle Course concerning the Reformation of Souls and the Bodies’) summarizes
different diseases, therapeutics and the hygiene. It also discusses the role of psychology in the treatment. This book is written in an easy to understand format for the nonspecialist.

The third book Kitab al-Aghziya (Book on Foodstuffs) discusses numerous drugs, and the importance of food and nutrition.

References