

Medieval medical authorities

Hippocrates, 450-370 BC, b. island of Cos, where he founded a medical school. He believed in observation and study of the body and that illness had a rational explanation. He treated holistically and considered diet, rest, fresh air and hygiene to be important for individuals. He also noted that illnesses presented in different degrees of severity from one individual to another and that people responded differently to illness and disease. He connected thought, ideas and feelings with the brain rather than the heart. His main works were the *Aphorisms*, *Diagnostics* and *Prognostics*. From the time of Galen, the *Aphorisms* were divided into 7 books and were central to the *Articella*, the basis of advanced teaching in Europe for four centuries from the twelfth. Hippocrates developed the eponymous oath of medical ethics. He is still known as the 'Father of Medicine'.

Claudius Galen, c. 130 AD, studied in Greece, Alexandria and other parts of Asia Minor. He became chief physician to the gladiator school at Pergamum where he gained experience in the treatment of wounds! From the 160s he worked at Rome where he became physician to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. He was the first to dissect animals in order to understand the functions of the body and made several important discoveries, e.g. that urine formed in the kidneys and that the arteries carry blood; but he didn't discover circulation. Galen collated all significant Greek and Roman medical thought up to his own time, adding his own discoveries and theories. The concept of the innate heat of the body was one of the enduring theories in medieval medicine — Galen believed that women were naturally colder than men.

Al-Razi (Rhazes), c. 865-c. 925, b. Ray, Persia. Rhazes was one of the most renowned Islamic physicians and a major figure in the history of medicine in the western world. Having studied mathematics, alchemy, literature and philosophy, he went on to study medicine in Ray and later in Baghdad. He wrote his most famous work for his patron Mansur ibn Ishaq, ruler of Khurasan. Entitled *Kitab el-Mansuri* (Latin *Liber medicinalis Almansoris* – Almansor's Book of Medicine), the work was first printed in Latin in 1497. In ten books, the most famous was the ninth, a detailed description of diseases, which was on the medical curriculum at Tübingen up to the fifteenth century.

Avicenna (Ibn-Sīnā), c. 980-1037, b. Afshana (modern Uzbekistan, but Persian empire in his time), probably the most renowned and influential thinker and writer of the Islamic Golden Age. Important for his influential Book of Healing and the *Qanun (Canon medicinae)*. We know of 240 books authored by him (extant titles), of which 40 were on medical matters.

Aegidius (Gilles de Corbeil), c. 1140-c. 1220, French Royal Physician and teacher, Aegidius had studied at the medical school of Salerno.

Gilbertus Anglicus (Gilbert the Englishman), c. 1180-c. 1250, received early education in England before continuing his studies at the Salerno Medical School. He authored the *Compendium medicinae* in seven books; this aimed to be a comprehensive encyclopedia of medical and surgical knowledge up to the time of writing.

Arnaldus de Villa Nova, c. 1240-1311, a Catalan physician, taught at Montpellier and spent time at the court of Aragon. He went to Paris where he gained renown as a doctor. His religious views incurred the displeasure of Pope Clement V who summoned him to Avignon. De Villa Nova died en route. He is thought to have translated texts from Arabic to Latin, including works by Avicenna. He is reputed to have been the author of the *Regimen sanitatis ad regem Aragonum* which features in some of the Irish translations.

Lanfrancus de Mediolano (Lanfranc of Milan), c. 1250-1306. Exiled from Milan due to his involvement in the Guelph vs Ghibelline struggle he went to Lyons and then to Paris (1295). He became professor of surgery at the Collège de St. Côme. His *Chirurgia magna* was completed in 1296 and first printed at Venice in 1490.

Bernard of Gordon, fl. 1283-1308, was born c. 1258 in France, where he taught at the University of Montpellier. A practising physician, his most influential work was the *Practica, seu Lilium medicinae*, compiled in 1305 'to provide physicians with a comprehensive guide to the theory and practice of pathology and therapeutics'.

John of Gaddesden (Johannes de Gaddesden), b. c. 1280, studied arts, theology and medicine at Oxford. He is credited with being the first eminent English physician to have completed his training in England. He became court physician to Edward III. His *Rosa Anglica*, compiled 1304-17 borrows heavily from Bernard of Gordon's *Lilium medicinae*. It contains a strong element of folk medicine and charms. It was first printed at Pavia in 1492.

Gerard de Solo (Geraldus de Solo), fl. first half of the 14th century, was *maitre-régent* at the University of Montpellier. He wrote several treatises and is best known for his Commentary on the ninth book of Almansor of Rhazes, important for its medicinal compounds.

Niccolò Bertruccio, d. 1347, physician, anatomist and professor of medicine and logic at the University of Bologna where one of his pupils was Guy de Chauliac. His *Collectorium*, first published in 1509, was an important work.

Valescus de Taranta, 1382-1417, Portuguese doctor, studied and taught at the University of Montpellier. He authored the *Philonium pharmaceuticum et chirurgicum* and wrote on epidemics and plague.

Pietro di Argellata, 1391-1423, b. Argelato (near Bologna). Studied at Bologna under French master surgeon, Guy de Chauliac. Di Argellata later taught at Bologna and was a practising surgeon. His *De chirurgia* became a standard text.

Gulielmus Copus (Wilhelm Kopp), 1461-1532, b. Basel, translated medical texts from Greek to Latin. He was a friend of Erasmus and physician to François I of France.