



Some Prescriptions from Abulcasis for Epilepsy Treatment

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Abstract

The Kitāb al-Taṣrīf (Book of medical arrangement) is the masterpiece of the well-known Cordovan physician Abulcasis Al-Zahrāwī (c.936-c.1013). This author was also an eminent surgeon, the first of Medieval Islam, and his influence reached as far as Renaissance Europe. The 9th treatise of his work is an interesting medieval treatise of cardiology and neurology, including the correct treatment of some of their most common ailments and diseases. It contains recipes of a great value to the fields of pharmacology, cardiology and neurology. This paper is an approach to this treatise, and includes the translation to English from some of its fragments referring to recipes of remedies that are beneficial for epilepsy treatment, according to the 502nd Arabic manuscript of the Süleymaniye Umumi Kütüphanesi from Istanbul, and the 137th manuscript of the Ṭibb Taymūr collection from the Egyptian National Library and Archives (Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya) in Cairo.

Keywords: Abulcasis Al-Zahrāwī, Medieval Arab Medicine, Medieval Arab Pharmacology, Epilepsy, Kitāb Al-Taṣrīf.

INTRODUCTION

Abulcasis Al-Zahrāwī (c.936-c.1013) [1] is one of the most outstanding physicians of Al-Andalus, besides an eminent surgeon, the first one of Medieval Islam [2].

The masterpiece of this well-known Cordovan author is titled *Kitāb al-Taṣrīf* (Book of medical arrangement) [3], that is divided into thirty treatises [4] and whose influence reached as far as Renaissance Europe [5].

In the field of pharmacology, which this article mainly is about, Abulcasis is a very representative figure due to his important achievements [6].

The 9th treatise of this important work is an interesting medieval treatise on different fields of medicine, such as cardiology and neurology, including the correct treatment of some of their most common ailments and diseases. This treatise is unpublished nowadays and it contains recipes of a great pharmacological value.

I am currently preparing a study of full treatise with a Spanish translation

Below is the English translation of some texts referring to five recipes with remedies that are beneficial for epilepsy treatment, according to the 502nd Arabic manuscript of the Süleymaniye Umumi Kütüphanesi from Istanbul, and the 137th manuscript of the Ṭibb Taymūr collection from the Egyptian National Library and Archives (Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya), in Cairo.

RECIPES FOR EPILEPSY TREATMENT

Recipe of an Electuary for Epilepsy and other Diseases [f.452]

Recipe of a beneficial electuary for anxiety, restlessness,

epilepsy every waxing moon and heart palpitations. Its ingredients: Take 2 *dirhams* of cassia fistula; nard, spikenard and lichen, from each, 2 *dirhams*; bugloss, costus and elecampane, from each, ½ *dirham*; gold and silver, from each, 2 carats; musk and amber, from each, 3 carats; yellow amber and coral, from each, 1,5 *dirhams*; and enough honey. Mix everything up and put it aside. The dose is like that of a bean mixed with syrup at the beginning, middle and end of the waxing moon. Inhaling a lentil's worth of this remedy with water, in which chard and basil have been cooked, that will cure the patient of epilepsy.

Another Recipe for the Same Treatment as the Previous One [f.452]

Recipe of an electuary made with pearls that has the same benefits as the previous prescription. Its ingredients: Take camphor root and dornic, from each, 3 *dirhams*; sealed mud, undrilled pearls, coral, raw silk and chalk, from each, 1 *dirham*; and 1,5 *dāniqs* or 1/5 *dirham* of castoreum. Crush everything, sieve it and knead it with honey, Then use this remedy when needed, taking an amount equal to a bean.

Recipe of a Remedy for Epilepsy and other Diseases [f.453-f.454]

Recipe of a beneficial remedy for epilepsy, anxiety, restlessness, and heart palpitations. Its ingredients: Take Chinese cinnamon, nard, camphor root and dornic, from each, 2 *dirhams*; and 1,5 *dirhams* of henbane seed. Crush everything and knead it with pure honey. The dose is 1 *dirham* of this remedy together with syrup, in which borage has been macerated, God the Almighty willing.

Recipe of a Remedy for Epilepsy and other Diseases [f.454]

Recipe of a beneficial remedy for epilepsy every waxing

moon and heart palpitations, as well as for melancholic and depressive mood: Take 2 *dirhams* of cassia fistula; nard, spikenard and lichen, from each, 2 *dirhams*; bugloss, costus and elecampane, from each, 1,5 *dirhams*; gold and silver, from each, 2 carats; musk and camphor, from each, 3 carats; and yellow amber and coral, from each, 1 *dirham*. Crush everything and sieve it with unsmoked honey. The dose is the amount equivalent to a bean for three consecutive days at the beginning, middle and end of the waxing moon, taking the remedy together with mixed syrup. It is a beneficial medication, God the Almighty willing.

Recipe of a Remedy for Epilepsy and other Diseases [f.456]

Recipe of a beneficial remedy for epilepsy, anxiety, restlessness, and heart palpitations: Take nard, Chinese cinnamon, camphor root and doric, from each, 2 *dirhams*; 1 *dirham* of dried grapefruit peel; and 1/2 *dirham* of dill seed. Crush all these drugs and sieve them; then mix everything up. Take for three consecutive days 1 *dirham* of this remedy, together with 1,5 ounces of syrup in which borage has been macerated. It is certainly an amazing and beneficial medication.

APPENDIX

Glossary: Weights and Measures

1 Carat (*qīrāt*)= 200 milligrams

1 *Dāniq* = 1/6 de *dirham*

1 *Dirham*= 3,12 grams

1 Ounce ((*ūqiyya*)= 28,34 grams

CONCLUSION

Abulcasis Al-Zahrāwī is, without any doubt, one of the most

important medieval physicians and he influenced both Muslim world and Occident as far as Renaissance Europe. His main work is a masterpiece entitled *Kitāb al-Taṣrif li-man ‘ajiza ‘an al-ta’lif* (Book of medical arrangement), which is in a high-ranking place within surgery, medicine and pharmacology of Al-Andalus. In addition, this book exemplifies the high level achieved by Arab scientific knowledge in the Middle Ages, and so it is essential to study its pages in order to make them known to other areas of knowledge. This article contributes to this. The texts translated and studied in this paper certify the relevance of this eminent author in the history of Islamic science as well as his prominent position in the history of universal science.

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