

ANCIENT HISTORY OF OBSTETRICS & GYNAECOLOGY

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ABU AL-QASIM AL-ZAHRAWI

Abu al-Qasim Al-Zahrawi, known also by his Latin name Albucasis, was born near Cordoba in Islamic Spain (Andalusia) in 936 CE and died in 1013 CE. A street in Cordoba is named Albucasis after him. He was a descendent of the Ansar tribe of Arabia who had settled earlier in Spain. His portrait is shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Portrait of Al-Zahrawi

He was one of the greatest surgeons in the pre-modern times. His encyclopaedia of surgery, known as Al-Tasrif was a detailed work in thirty treatises, which was completed around 1000 CE as a result of almost 50 years of medical practice and experience. Al-Tasrif contains the earliest pictures of surgical instruments of the history, which obviously contained those for treatment of ailments in Obstetrics and Gynaecology as well. At least two hundred of his instruments were described and illustrated in various places. They are displayed in his honour across the river Wadi Al-Kabir in Cordoba and as a tribute to him they are exhibited in various museums, of various countries. Even Hakeem Saeed of Hamdard Foundation in Karachi, had created a permanent display of Al-Zahrawi's Silver surgical instruments. Al-

Zahrawi had also classified 325 diseases and discussed their symptomatology and treatments, including for the first time in the medical history, **a haemorrhagic disease transmitted by unaffected women to their male children**, now call Haemophilia.

Al-Zahrawi's books incorporated all aspects of surgery and its various branches. Even **OBSTETRICS AND GYNAECOLOGY** formed a part of his works. There were sections on cauterization and other procedures as well.

It was no wonder that Al-Zahrawi's outstanding achievement awakened in Europe a hunger for Arabic medical literature, and that his book reached such prominence, that a modern historian considered it as the foremost text book in the Western World, of that time.

Al-Tasrif was translated in numerous languages including Latin, English, Spanish and others. Al-Zahrawi was not only one of the greatest surgeons of his time but a great educationist and a psychiatrist as well.

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