



Medieval Recipes by Al-Zahrāwī for Heart Palpitations Treatment

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Abstract

The *Kitāb al-Taṣrīf* (Book of medical arrangement) is the masterpiece of the distinguished Cordovan physician Abū l-Qāsim Khalaf Ibn ‘Abbās Al-Zahrāwī (c.936-c.1013), known among other names as Abulcasis. This book exemplifies the high level achieved by Arab science in the Middle Ages, and for this important reason it is essential to study its pages in order to make them known to researchers and academics in other areas of scientific knowledge. Its author, Abulcasis Al-Zahrāwī, 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 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 heart palpitations 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; Cardiology; Neurology; *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 [4,5] and whose influence reached as far as Renaissance Europe [6]. In the field of pharmacology [7], which this article mainly is about, Abulcasis is a very representative figure due to his important achievements [8]. 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 This treatise is unpublished nowadays and it contains recipes of great pharmacological value.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 seven recipes with remedies that are beneficial for heart palpitations and tachycardia treatment, according to the 502nd Arabic manuscript of the Süleymaniye Umumi Kutuphanesi from Istanbul, and the 137th manuscript of the Ṭibb Taymur collection from the Egyptian National Library and Archives (Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya), in Cairo.

Recipes for Heart Palpitations Treatment

Recipe for a Beneficial Electuary for Heart Palpitations and Epilepsy [F.452]

Recipe for an electuary beneficial 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.

A Brief Recipe for a Beneficial Electuary for Anxiety, Restlessness, and Heart Palpitations [f.453]

Its ingredients: Take 1 *dirham* of crushed dried borage, and camphor root and doric, from each, 4 *dirhams*. Crush and mix everything, and take in fasting 1 *dirham* of the remedy at the beginning, middle, and end of the waxing moon, mixed with syrup.

Recipe of Another Beneficial Remedy for Anxiety, Restlessness and Heart Palpitations [f.453]

Take spikenard, Chinese cinnamon, camphor root and doric, from each, 2 *dirhams*; 1 *dirham* of dried grapefruit peel; and 1,5 *dirhams* of dill seed. Crush and mix everything, and take every month for three consecutive days 1 *dirham* of this remedy together with 1,5 ounces of syrup, in which borage has been macerated, God willing

Recipe of a Musk Remedy Beneficial for Several Diseases [f.455]

Recipe of a musk remedy, from Sābūr's book [9,10], prepared with absinthe, which is beneficial for heart palpitations, throat tumors, stomach dampness and weakness, heart pains and cold bilious gases. It also protects the heart. Its ingredients: Take Byzantine absinthe, Socotran aloe and Chinese rhubarb, from each, 6 *dirhams*; aromatic spikenard, musk, spica, sugar and myrrh, from each, 2 *dirhams*; ammi, saffron and celery seed, from each, 4 *dirhams*; and 1,5 *dirhams* of castoreum. Mix all these medicines, after crushing and sieving them, mix everything with pure honey, put it aside in a flat container and use it when needed.

Recipe of a Beneficial Electuary for Heart Palpitations [f.455]

Recipe of an electuary, from the book of the compound remedies by Ibn Al-Jazzār [11], that is beneficial for heart palpitations caused by yellow bile, and that it is also a soft purgative: Take violet flowers, white peat moss and red rose leaves, from each, 1 *dirham*; and mastic and fennel seed, from each, 1 *dāniq*. Crush everything, sieve it, and mix it with 2 ounces of quince syrup, plum syrup, rose syrup, or apple syrup. If the cough is very strong, add poppy seeds, peeled cucumber seeds and peeled melon seeds, from each, 1,5 *dirhams*; 0,5 *dirham* of liquorice syrup; and 0,5 *dirham* of tragacanth. It is certainly an excellent remedy.

Recipe of a Beneficial Remedy for Anxiety, Restlessness and Heart Palpitations [f.456]

Take spikenard, Chinese cinnamon, camphor root and doric, from each, 2 *dirhams*; 1 *dirham* of dried grapefruit peel; and 0,5 *dirham* of dill. Crush everything, sieve, mix, and administer 1 *dirham* of this remedy to the patient every three consecutive days, together with 1,5 ounces of syrup in which borage has been macerated. It is certainly an amazing and wonderful medicine.

A Brief Recipe of a Remedy for Heart Weakness and Tachycardia

Take gummed myrobalan from Kabul and crush it; then, add 1/8 of *dirham* of musk and take it with wine or rose syrup. It is really an amazing medicine.

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-Taṣrīf li-man 'ajiza 'an al-ta'līf* (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 researchers and academics in other areas of scientific 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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