Ibn-zuhr was born in 1094 at Spanish city of Eshbeelia (modern day Seville, Andalucia, Spain) when Islamic civilization dominated the world. He was born in a famous medical dynasty of Al-Andulus and became the most renowned member. Destiny led him to be one of the greatest Muslim physicians, pharmacist, surgeon, parasitologist, Islam scholar and teacher in Al-Andulus. Contrary to the general practice of the Muslim scholars of that era, he confined his work to only one field of medical sciences. This enabled him to produce works of everlasting fame.

Ibn-Zuhr belonged to banu Zuhr. He was 6th generation physician but the most famous of them all. His family was royal physicians to Al-mohad ruler Abu Yusaf Yaqub Al-Mansoor. Then he moved from Seville and studied at university of Cordoba. He began his training under his father Abu Ala Zuhr. He also learned Literature, Hadith, Jurisprudence and Doctrine.

The enormous contribution of Ibn-Zuhr to society and medial profession were progressive and based on evidence. He is considered father of experimental surgery. Ibn-Zuhr’s application of an experimental animal model to a clinical problem was the fore runner of the method by which many current surgical procedures were developed. He can be credited for perpetuating structured training and evidence based practice in surgery.

He made discoveries, challenged existing theories and developed training method. His training methods were logical, structured and futuristic. He belonged in many respects to the dogmatists rather than to empirics.

Ibn-Zuhr invented tracheotomy for suffocating patients which has saved hundreds of lives to this date. He not only described correct steps but perfected training by simulated procedure on goats. The concept of simulated training is still flourishing.

In his own words:
“Earlier on in my training when I read those opinions (controversies), I cut on the lung pipe of a goat after incising the skin and the covering sheath underneath. Then I completely cut off the substance of the pipe, an area just less than the size of a tirmisah (lupine seed). Then, I kept washing the wound with water and honey until it healed and it (the animal) totally recovered and lived for a long time”

Ibn-Zuhr was not just a keen observer of patients and remedies; buried within in his generally dry narrative are candid recollections and views on a variety of subjects and of his society. He produced many books on medical sciences. Thanks to the translation of his books into latin and Hebrew, Ibn-Zuhr had been an influential figure in European medicine until the 17th century. The most famous books of Ibn-Zuhr are as follow:
Kitab Al-Taysir  Fi Al-Mudawat Wa Al-Tadbir
(Treatments and Diets) is a medical encyclopedia that gives evidence of medical skillfulness and talent of ibn-Zuhr. He offered it to his friend Ibn-Rishid. This book was translated into Latin and printed 8 times between 1490-1554 AB. In 1931 a project was launched to translate by George Sarton, which was accomplished in 1983 when it was finally published by Arab-League.

Kitab Al-Iktisad  Fis Islah al Anfis Wa al Asjad:
(Caring souls and bodies). It is a sort of summary of diseases, cures, health, prevention science and psychotherapy.

Kitab Al-Aghdia wa Al-Adwya”
(Nutrition and medication). Ibn-Zuhr described in this book various kinds of nutrients and drugs and their effects on health. It was translated in Latin and is still in the manuscript form, copies of these are present in many Libraries including the Public Library in Rabat, and the libraries of Paris, Oxford in England and Florence in Italy.

Ibn-Zuhr was a progressive physician and made many discoveries which reflects the intellectual activity of Muslim scientists. He described correctly for the first time scabies, and itch mite and thus may be regarded as the first parasitologist.

Likewise he prescribed direct feeding though gullet and rectum in cases where normal feeding was not possible. He described the methods which were ingenious. He proposes to support the strength by placing the patient in a tepid bath of nutritious liquids but does not recommend this. He speaks more favorably of the introduction of food into the stomach by silver tube and proposes strongly the use of nutritive enemas.

Ibn-Zuhr based his research on empiricism and scientific examination. He was able to discover some diseases that were unknown before such as pericarditis mediastinitis, empyma, meningitis, scabies and others. He operated on trachea, and was the first to use hypodermics for artificial feeding.

Ibn-Zuhr was also an influential medical teacher. He lays stress on observation and experiment and his contribution greatly influenced the medical science for several centuries both in the east and the west. He stressed the importance of a practical and sound knowledge of anatomy for surgical trainees.

In his own words:
“And in case you have mastered the science of dissection then drain by the scalpel in the way that you will not come across a vein, artery or a nerve or anything that its injury will lead to an extra harm to the patient. But if you were one of the group like me and did not practice dissection but knew it only by imitation, keep away from the knife as nothing you know by mere imagination will be the same in real life; especially in the case of small organs”

Further more, Ibn-Zuhr insisted on a well supervised and structured training program for the surgeon-to-be, before allowing him to operate independently.
In his own words:

“However I did mention it hoping to see among people, practitioners who are good at it; having enough skill, experience and training. Indeed no one should consider doing it unless he has practiced it as a student under the direct supervision of his teacher ‘bain yadai mooallimehi’ for a long time. Then practiced it on his own for sometime”

He also drew the red lines at which physician should stop during his general management of a surgical condition, a step forward in evolution of general surgery as specialty of its own.

Ibn-Zuhr enriched surgical and medical knowledge by performing postmortem examination & dissection of animals. He was one of the greatest Andulacian physicians. He earned the esteem of most of his contemporaries, on top of whom was his friend. Ibn-Rushd, who qualified him in his book. Al-Kuliyat: as the greatest doctor after Galen.

His holistic approach to medicine and his spontaneous vignettes make him one of the most refreshing physician of any age. This account of the life and legacy of Ibn-Zuhr, reveals the man and his world, his importance in his own times and him relevance to our world today. Against a modern culture of often impersonal democratized, and costly health care, Ibn-Zuhr’s embodiment of the wisdom of the ages and his role as leader-priest can be an inspiration.

In conclusion and in agreement with Ibn-Khaldun, Ibn-Said and Sarton, “among distinguished physicians of the Muslims and the West, Ibn-Zuhr was one of the greatest”. He was perhaps the greatest clinicians of Islam after Al-Razi. Furthermore, he was the most famous physician of his time, not only among Muslims, but also in Christendom and his influence upon European medicine was maintained until the end of 17th century.

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