With the western world falling into the dark ages in the 7th Century AD, the medical knowledge of Hippocrates, Aristotle, Soranus and Galen was saved from vanishing and transferred to the east by the effort and work of a small number of Greek physicians. (Fig.1, Fig.2)

Paulus Aegineta (625-690 AD) was the last and greatest of these clinicians.

Very little is known about his life. He was born in the island of Aegina, Greece, practiced medicine at Alexandria and travelled widely. (Fig.3)

The fourth book (of his Encyclopaedia of Medicine in Seven Books) is dedicated to skin disorders in which he describes the clinical presentation, aetiology, and management of the various derm atological conditions quoting the earlier Greek physicians (Fig.5). We propose that this was the first Western Dermatology Text book.

Paulus Aegineta's encyclopaedia bridged the west with the east. Many of the greatest Arabian doctors including El Razes, Haly Abbas, Albucasis and Avicenna were influenced to a great extent by his work (Fig.6). They adopted many of the earlier methods of treatment for many skin disorders that were carefully described in his 4th book. For instance, with regards to “ersypelase” management, venesection (Fig.7), “cooling and repellent applications” and “cholagogues” were used by succeeding Arabian physicians in the 10th century.

Paulus' work was a launching point for the eastern physicians. They developed this inherited knowledge further. A good example is leprosy. This was described in detail by Paulus Aegineta but the clinical differences between lepromatous leprosy and tuberculoid leprosy were only recognised later by Haly Abbas (died 980 A.D), while the neurological symptoms were first described by Albucasis (died 1009 A.D). However, leprosy treatments did not greatly differ from those of earlier times. (Fig.8)

Another example is the treatment of “Foul ulcers”. Paulus recommended the application of both honey and turpentine (Fig.9, Fig.10). The same preparations were used later by Haly Abbas and Avicenna but further contribution to ulcer management was made by Alshaharavius. He made the remarkable observation of paying particular attention to the edges of the ulcer, suggesting cutting them off if they were hard. This is well known to us now as debridement.

Paulus Aegineta’s encyclopedia was a launching point for the eastern physicians who followed.

In conclusion, Paulus Aegineta contributed the first Western Dermatology Textbook in the dying days of the Roman Empire. His work preserved the precious medical knowledge of the Romans and Greeks for later generations and was built upon by the great eastern physicians who followed.

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Conclusion

In conclusion, Paulus Aegineta contributed the first Western Dermatology Textbook in the dying days of the Roman Empire. His work preserved the precious medical knowledge of the Romans and Greeks for later generations and was built upon by the great eastern physicians who followed.