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History of Medicine

Indian physicians books.

The practices of ancient Hindu, or Vedantic, medicine (1500-1000 bc) are described in the works of two later physicians, Charaka (lived about 2nd century ad) and Susruta (lived about 4th century ad). Susruta gave recognizable descriptions of malaria, tuberculosis, and diabetes. He also wrote about Indian hemp, or Cannabis, and henbane for inducing anesthesia, and included specific antidotes and highly skilled treatments for bites of venomous snakes. An ancient Hindu drug derived from the root of the Indian plant *Rauwolfia serpentina* was the source of the first modern tranquilizer. In the field of surgery, the Hindus are acknowledged to have attained the highest skill in all antiquity. They were probably the first to perform successful skin grafting and plastic surgery for the nose.

With the rise of Buddhism the study of anatomy was prohibited, and with the Muslim conquest of India, beginning around 1000 bc, the field of medicine further declined and ultimately stagnated. Nevertheless, much valuable knowledge concerning hygiene, diet, and surgery was passed to the West through the writings of Indian physicians.