

Alshamel fi Sana'at Tebbi'at: A Comprehensive Book on the Materia Medica

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Abstract

Background: Ala-al-din abu Al-Hassan Ali ibn Abi-Hazm al-Qarshi al-Dimashqi, known as Ibn al-Nafis (1210-1288 AD), was a Muslim Syrian physician primarily famous for being the first to describe the pulmonary circulation of the blood. The most voluminous of his books is Alshamel fi Sana'at tebbi'at, which is a comprehensive medical encyclopedia. It comprised 300 volumes of notes, from which only 80 volumes are published. His writings are cataloged in many libraries around the world. The aim of this review article, as a tribute to Ibn al-Nafis, was to introduce his valuable but neglected encyclopedia of Materia Medica.

Methods: Ibn al-Nafis' traditional approach in his "Alshamel fi Sana'at tebbi'at" book is studied in the present article.

Results: Alshamel fi Sana'at tebbi'at covers three branches of knowledge. The first category is devoted to theoretical traditional medicine. The second is in four sections where much of it is not available yet. The third category is on Materia Medica covering the aspect of Unani medicine, from which only 28 volumes of the comprehensive book on the traditional medicine have been found so far. The latter, introduces mono-ingredient medications in alphabetical order. Each chapter, in several parts, is dedicated to the botanical characteristics and nature of each mono-ingredient medication. In addition, this book explains traditional pharmacokinetic of every single medication for each human body organs.

Conclusion: Based on pharmaco-mechanistic perspective on Alshamel fi Sana'at tebbi'at, it could be considered as the main reference book on traditional medicine and pharmacy, worthy of revival.

Keywords • Materia medica • Medicine • Traditional • Pharmaceutical preparations • Pharmacy