

Greco-Arab treasure of knowledge of Central Nervous System

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ABSTRACT:

Man is distinguished from animal because of intelligence and power of decision and discrimination. All higher animals have brain but are at lower level in order of evolution. Somatosensory and motor functions are almost similar both in animals and in humans, but others cortical and subcortical functions are different. So far as regulatory mechanisms are concerned they are also more or less similar. So many reflexes also mimic in both. The earliest description of various cerebral faculties was given by the Greco-Arab physicians. The formal book on faculties was written by Galen and he incorporated all the preceding knowledge of Greek physicians in this. Most of the Greco-Arab physicians described five internal senses and attributed different cerebral areas to them. Some physicians described number of internal senses as three. Whatever account of cerebral functions are given that is based primarily on logical imagination and arguments and secondarily on observation of functional disturbances in patients who were suffering from mental diseases. The most detail and comprehensive description is seen in The Canon of Medicine of Avicenna and books written by his followers. Haly Abbas another stalwart, had described mental faculties as three. A very coherent and logical functional description is given in respect of different sensory modalities and theirs cerebral processing. Like today precise topographic functional representation, tracts, nuclei and sub cortical areas are not mentioned. The most important reason for this might be their naked eye observation and lack of anatomical dissection of human. Topographic allocation of cerebral areas is definitely not correct but approach of Greco-Arab physicians in the field of nervous system is appreciable. In this paper an attempt is made to familiarized the reader with the ancient knowledge of nervous system, which was present about 2000 years ago.

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