

Greek doctors in the roman world essay sample

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* Progress in medicine was made, as new surgical instruments were devised to help the surgeons perform intricate operations, such as the removal of the polyps from the nose and the goitres from the throat.

* Dioscorides went all around the known world, and collected all the herbs he could find: experimenting on them and classifying them. This must have immensely enlarged his knowledge about natural cures. But most importantly, by enclosing all these facts in the book Herbarium, he made possible for other doctors across the known world to acknowledge these facts.

* Galen revived the methods used by doctors in Hippocrate's time that were falling in disuse. He practiced Hippocrate's methods of clinical observation: examining his patients carefully and noting their symptoms. He also accepted the theory of the four humours. The theory that called for reason of disease, the unbalance of the four liquids present in the human body: blood, phlegm, black and yellow bile. If there was too much of one it was too bad, all the four liquids in the body had to be present at equal amounts. Also the balance of the four liquids changed from season to season. In one season it was better to have more of certain amounts of liquid, in order to keep the body in good health.

* Still believing in the theory of the four humours, Galen decided to go further than Hippocrates in developing treatments to restore the balance of the four humours. He believed in the use of opposites. This involved treatments such as pepper, which would bring heat to a man whose disease was thought to be caused by cold, or cucumber which would cool a man whoses illness was thought to be caused by heat. Violent gymnastic

exercises prescribed for weak or convalescent people; singing and breathing exercises for a man with a deformed chest.

* 1. Galen advised his pupils to dissect apes, because apes are the most resembling animals to humans, therefore even their inside structure should be similar to the human one. Apes were also much easier to obtain than human bodies.

2. Galen, apart from human bodies and apes, dissected many pigs.

3. Galen didn't stop at analysing the anatomy of humans, but he also went in some areas of the physiology. He developed a far reaching, if incorrect, theory of the movement of the blood. He probably also realised that there was a circulation of the blood through the lungs. The working of the nervous system was another of Galen's interests and he conducted a number of experiments on the spinal chords of pigs. He went into a very accurate deepness in this last study, in fact when he realised that by cutting around certain vertebrae of the spinal chord, you could paralyse somebody, he accurately researched where exactly the cuttings had to be done, to paralyse certain parts of the body. E. g if you cut through . . . behind the fifth vertebrae of the head . . . then both arms are paralysed.

* 1. Galen's ideas were so important, because they had a great influence, lasting for over 1200 years. During his lifetime he wrote a great number of books, in which he produced a complete system of medicine. The system not only included his ideas, but contained other important doctors' ideas as well: Hippocrates, Erasistratus, Herophilus and other Greek physicians. Galen's

books provided doctors with a mass of detailed and well organised information.

2. Galen's ideas both appealed to Christians and Muslims, because they pointed out the fact that organs were produced by a " Creator"