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Andreas Vesalius

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The Founder of Modern Human Anatomy

Andreas Vesalius was the founder of modern human anatomy. Before him, there were a few early attempts on studying the human body.

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Anatomy in Ancient History

Hippocrates was the first established medical scientist who studied organ structure and functions followed by Aristotle and others who described and differentiated relationship between organs. Herophilos and Erasistratus furthered the anatomical research and presented far more accurate structure of a human body than their predecessors.

Later, the Greek physician Galen (129-210AD), well known for his research and discourses on physiology and science, proposed new theories related to body functioning and diseases based on his study and dissection of animals (monkeys, apes and others). His medical research made him the earliest most notable anatomist and a great authority on the subject. His work influenced and dominated the western medicine and science for about 1500 years.

See also: [Ancient Medicine](#) ^[1]

Andreas Vesalius - The Founder of Modern Human Anatomy

“I will pass over the other arts in silence and direct my words for a while to that which is responsible for the health of mankind; certainly of all the arts that human genius has discovered, this is by far the most useful, indispensable, difficult, and laborious.”

(Andreas Vesalius, De Humani Corporis Fabrica)

Before Vesalius, human anatomy was not learned by studying or dissecting bodies. Much of the knowledge was fictional, chiefly contributed by Galen over a millennium ago. Vesalius was the first to challenge the theories of Galen and carried out dissection to closely observe the inner structure and construction of the human body. Based on his direct observation through dissection, Vesalius discovered, recorded and published the facts of real anatomy. He marked the beginning of scientific research and observation with his courageous efforts and profound skills. However, his magnum opus; De Humani Corporis Fabrica (On the fabric of the human body) revolutionized the science of medicine and laid foundation for the modern human anatomy.

Family, Early Life & Education of Andreas Vesalius

The great physician & anatomist, Andreas van Wesel was born on December 31, 1514 in Brussels, Belgium to an erudite family. His forefathers had been involved with science and medicine for a long time. His own interest in the medical field can safely be attributed to his heritage. His father - a pharmacist to the court inspired him to learn Greek and Latin to emulate the family traditions.

In 1528, at the age of 14, Vesalius was enrolled in the University of Louvain where he was taught Latin, Greek and Hebrew. He moved to the University of Paris in 1533 and studied medicine for 3 years. Notwithstanding the conservative approach at the time, he became keenly interested in anatomy and used to study the bones of corpses in the Saints Innocents cemetery. In 1536, he left Paris due to the war and returned to Louvain without graduating. After staying there briefly, he moved to the University of Padua in Italy and acquired his Doctor of Medicine degree with the highest distinction in 1537. Only on the following day in reward to his brilliant academic career, anatomical knowledge and skills, the Senate of Venice nominated him as Professor of Surgery at the age of 23.

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