The First Pediatrician*

The first recognized “pediatrician”, by virtue of his publication of the first pediatric textbook, *The Diseases of Children*, in the 10th century, was the great Persian physical Muhammad ibn Zakariya Razi (aka Rhazes; 854 CE-925 CE). While he wrote extensively on various topics of medicine, chemistry, philosophy and ethics, it was this first dedicated text on pediatrics that brought attention to our specialty at a time when that was unheard of, earning him widespread recognition as the Father of Pediatrics. Rhazes studied music and chemistry in his early years, but by the age of 30, he turned his interest to medicine, becoming a prolific writer.

Of his numerous papers and texts (some biographers reference more than 200), his *Treatise on the Smallpox and Measles* is often quote as a landmark paper. Biographical accounts also refer to his charity toward his poor patients and his selfless dedication to teaching his students. It appeared that he was somewhat of an iconoclast; seeing the need to criticize the man he admired, Galen, while advocating for medical evidence by experimentation, and emphasizing knowledge of anatomy, to be a good physician. His knowledge of, and emphasis on, human anatomy is told in the tale of his refusal of treatment of his chronic eye disease by a physician who could not name the different layers of the eye. He was, ultimately, blinded by his eye disease, possibly cataracts. This may have had something to do with his expertise in ophthalmology, but does not explain his knowledge of nephrology, obstetrics, surgery, anesthesia, infectious diseases and other areas such as pediatrics, as noted.

Much of his work was translated into different languages for subsequent instruction in various European schools of medicine. Publication space limitations prohibit more detail, but perhaps this has whetted your appetite for medical history.

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