**The Early Management of Inner Ear Disorders—17th Century Observations and Treatments**

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The European Renaissance of the 14th to 17th centuries included a renaissance in otology that started in Italy and progressed across Europe, predominantly to Germany, France, and Great Britain. Prominent amongst the pioneers was Andreas Vesalius (1514–1564), the ‘Father of Anatomy’, at the University of Padua, who described much of the structure of the ear, including the vestibulo-cochlear nerve bundle and the round and oval windows. The Eustachian tube, chorda tympani, and tensor tympani were described by Bartholomew Eustachius (1520–1574), Professor of Anatomy in Rome, who also wrote *Epistola de Auditary Organs* (1563),the oldest book dedicated to the ear. Theories concerning the physiology of hearing were also expounded, but accurate descriptions were still over 350yrs away.

The eighteenth century saw an acceleration in the development of the specialty, but the practice of otology was almost exclusively that of infective diseases. There were three main interventions: Eustachian tube catheterization (1724), myringotomy and simple mastoidectomy (Petit 1774). and post-aural mastoid abscess drainage (van Layden 1524). These were not greatly elaborated on until the mid-1800s when otologists such as Prosper Ménière, Adam Politzer, Joseph Toynbee, and others began the remarkable new wave of modern otological practice.

When examining modern accounts, most refer to authors from the 19th to 21st centuries; it is, however, interesting to reflect on the works of those who preceded them. Otological remedies and deafness are well recorded in accounts from the ancient Egyptian and Hellenic civilizations. The influence of Galen (AD 129–217) (who wrote extensively about the ear, the importance of abscess drainage, and experimental data concerning hearing in dogs after trauma) cannot be underestimated. His anatomical interpretations and clinical methods went largely unquestioned until Vesalius some 1300 years later. Aristotle (BC 384–322) developed some early physiological theories for hearing and hypothesized that the middle ear has to be air-filled to hear properly .

Mechanical devices for improving hearing are also usually attributed to the 18th century and afterwards. Regrettably, little attempt was made to address hearing problems before this as deafness was considered to be associated with retardation and ungodliness, although there were some notable exceptions.

This presentation attempts to examine the pre-18th century records of hearing loss and its treatments. Clearly, the otological conditions we treat today existed hundreds, probably thousands, of years ago. Various sources of information are considered, including ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics, a play by William Shakespeare, and the case history records of the 17th century apothecary, self-appointed Professor of Physik, best-selling medical author, engraver and artist, astrologer, publicist, possible plagiarist, and generally colourful character, William Salmon (1644–713)