



Summary :

Aretaeus belongs to the Eclectic school, as his work includes a blend of influences ranging from Hippocratic to the Pneumatici physicians. His therapeutic method was based on the use of medicinal herbs and the change of nutritional habits.

Other Names

Date and Place of Birth

ca. 120 AD – Cappadocia

Date and Place of Death

ca. 180 AD

Main Role

Physician

1. Introduction

Aretaeus of [Cappadocia](#) – as his name indicates – was born in Cappadocia around the 1st c. AD, perhaps around 120 AD.¹ He espoused Hippocratic views on medicine and he was also influenced by the doctrines of the Pneumatici. He is cited by pseudo-Alexander of [Aphrodisias](#)² as the author of a treatise on the prevention of diseases.

2. Works

In his works he studied in particular the phenomenon of fever as well as surgery. However, only four of his books survive, which refer to the causes and the symptoms of acute and chronic diseases, and another four which describe their treatment (see the first titles of the list of works). In his writings, Aretaeus often makes extensive references to the *Corpus Hippocraticum*. For each disease mentioned there is a detailed and systematic description of the organ where the disease resides, the etymology of the disease name, its symptomatology and the reasons for its existence. In addition, he does not fail to take into account the age and sex of the patients. Diseases such as asthma and diabetes are described in detail.

3. Activities – Therapeutic methods

Besides nosology, Aretaeus appears to have been particularly concerned with the female anatomy and physiology as well as surgery. A relevant treatise has survived. The surgical operations he claims he had conducted himself include artery incisions and brain surgery. Nevertheless, he rarely recommends surgical procedures. The physician picked out the differences between the cerebral and spinal cord palsies.

His therapeutic method is characteristically Hippocratic and involves tips about nutrition and the use of medicinal plants. As he claims, "medicine lies in food, just as food lies in medicine".³ With regard to gout, he states that "the doctor should not keep silent out of fear of shame for the disease, nor should he draw a veil over it. Some patients are often not afraid of death and for this reason they do not trust doctors."

Aretaeus was most likely not a superb physician. Despite this, he is considered a historical personality for the preservation and implementation of part of Archigenes' doctrines.



1. The town is unknown.

2. Alexander from Aphrodisias of Caria was a Peripatetic philosopher who flourished around 200 AD and wrote an extended commentary on Aristotle's work. Some of the works which are attributed to him, however, may not have been written by him. In such cases, the writer's identity is given as 'pseudo-Alexander' of Aphrodisias. On Alexander of Aphrodisias and his commentary on medicine, see Ierodiakonou, K., "Alexander of Aphrodisias on medicine as a stochastic art", in Ph.J., Van der Eick – H.F.J., Horstmannshoff – P.H., Schrijvers (eds.) *Ancient medicine in its socio-cultural context. Papers read at the congress held at Leiden university 13-15 April 1992* (Amsterdam – Atlanta 1995) pp. 473-485.

3. *CMG II 2*, p. 114.: «**Ε**ν τροφαῖ ζ γὰ ρ κείσεται τὰ φάρμακα, ἂ τὰρ καὶ ἐ ν φαρμάκοις ἢ τροφή».

Bibliography :

	Smith W.D. , <i>The Hippocratic tradition</i> , Ithaca 1979
	Sarton G. , <i>A History of Science</i> , London 1952
	Nutton V. , "Style and context in the method of healing", F. Kudlien, R. J. Durling (eds.), <i>Galen's method of healing, Proceedings of the 1982 Galen Symposium</i> , Leiden 1991, 1-25
	Wellman M. , "Aretaeus", <i>RE, II.1</i> , 1910, 669-670
	Oberhelman S. , "Aretaeus of Cappadocia, the pneumatic physician of the 1st century A.D.", H. Temporini (ed.), <i>ANRW II 37,2</i> , 1994, 941-946

Webliography :

	The Extant Works of Aretaeus, The Cappadocian http://www.chlt.org/sandbox/dh/aretaeusEnglish/index.html
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Glossary :

	Corpus Hippocraticum, the The corpus of Hippocratical texts. It consists of written texts concerning Greek Medicine, delivered particularly by the followers of Hippocratic thought.
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Auxiliary Catalogs

List of works

Περί αιτιών και σημείων οξέων και χρονίων παθών

Περί θεραπείας οξέων και χρονίων παθών (lost)

Περί πυρετών

Περί γυναικείων



Περί φυλακτικών

Χειρουργία