ENT Trivia

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OTOLOGY

Did you know that

Mongolian, Persian and Indian legends mentioned a common if innocent belief in the birth of children by way of the ear. In fact, the conception of the Virgin Mary was believed to have arisen from the breath of the Holy Ghost in her ear !!

Nemesis, the goddess of retribution was supposed to reside behind the right ear. (Noury)

The seat of memory was supposed to be in the lower part of the ear, according to Pliny.

If the ears tingle, then someone is supposed to be speaking about you. In fact, in rural Maine and Pennsylvania the popular motion is that if your right ear burns the speaker is a woman and if the left a man.

The breath of life passes by the right ear and, the breath of death by the left ear according to the Papyrus Ebers.

Papyrus Brugsch described otitis as "fire in the heart of the ear"

Hippocrates regarded otorrhoea to be secondary to cerebral abscess

Celsus gave an interesting description of foreign body removal from the ear : the patient should be encouraged to sneeze, or better still he should be bound to a table, with the affected ear downwards and the table should then be forcibly struck with a hammer, so that the foreign body may be shaken out of the ear.

Thomas Willis (1621-75) while describing the phenomenon of paracusis Willis gave the following example : a woman though deaf, yet so long as a drum was beaten within her chamber she heard every word perfectly : wherefore her husband kept a drummer on purpose for his servant, that by that means he might have some converse with his wife.

Joseph Toynbee became a martyr in the cause of the science of otology. On July 7th, 1866. believing that tinnitus might be relieved by inhalation of the vapours of chloroform and prussic acid, with subsequent Valsalva inflation, he subjected himself to the test, with a fatal result.

In Aristotle's view (384 - 322 B.C) the seat of hearing was in the occiput, which according to him was a cavity devoid of brain and filled with air.

Reference

1. Scott. Stevenson R. Guthrie D. 1949. *A History of otolaryngology*; E & S Livingstone Ltd.