Avenzoar (1092–1162 AD) and Averroes (1126–1198 AD) and Origin of the Cannula for Tracheotomy: Reply

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To the Editor,

Golzari et al. [1] made an attentive and authoritative observation of our article. They discuss the first experimental tracheotomy in a goat, which we refer to as being performed by ibn Zuhr (Andalusian Muslim physician, 1092–1162), whose correct Latin title is Avenzoar, not Averroes as we wrote. This mixup was due to the incunabula from which we collected the original sentences. The Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Munich offers a clear online copy of the book [2, 3]. The first part (three books and one “Antidotarium,” up to page 41) is the translation from ibn Zuhr’s (Avenzoar’s) writings (Kitab al-Taisir fi al-Mudawatwa al-Tadbir). The second section of the book (from page 43) is from ibn Rushd’s (Averroes’) “Colliget” or “Kulliyat” (Kitāb al-Kulliyāt al-Tibb) in seven books. Tracheotomy is described in the first part and therefore the procedure was reported by ibn Zuhr (Avenzoar) with no uncertainty. No substantial differences are detected when comparing the Latin text with the original Arabic edition of the manuscript [4].

Taking advantage of this opportunity, we would like to add the translation of the previously omitted text concerning the care that ibn Zuhr provided to heal the wound of the goat: “...et lavabatur vulnus cum aqua melli quotidie et quando vulnus incipiebat cooperiri carne de super spargebam pulverem subtilissimum nucum cipressi donec fuit liberate” (“...and the wound was washed every day with honey water and when the wound started to be

covered with flesh I spread very fine dust of cypress walnut until it was healed”) [3].

For many years (in 1490, 1496, 1497, 1514, 1537, 1542, 1553) the texts of ibn Zuhr and ibn Rushd were reprinted together in various editions. In this last edition, the text of ibn Rushd (Averroes), Colliget, was placed in the first part of the book for the first time, probably in relation to the greater success of this physician [5]. Averroes has been considered a disciple of Avenzoar [6], but he did not mention the experimental tracheotomy of his teacher or any tracheotomy procedure.

Conflict of interest None.

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