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### **Goats, Throats and the Father of Experimental Surgery**

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Despite tracheostomies being referenced in Ancient Egyptian scriptures, much controversy surrounded the procedure for many centuries. In 400BC, Hippocrates condemned the practice due to its unacceptable risk to the carotid arteries and as such, it was rarely performed. The disfavour of tracheostomy remained until the Islamic Era when Ibn Zuhr set up an experiment to “cut the lung pipe of a goat” and prove the lifesaving potential of the operation. The goat survived and Al Zuhr became an advocate for safer surgery; setting up the first structured surgical training programme and then insisting on the need for supervision to attain competency. Amongst his other contributions, he provided the first detailed description of middle ear inflammation, pharyngeal paralysis and the use of “soft feathers of chicken tails that were twirled in the ear” to treat an external auditory canal abscess of the King.

The inquisitive mind of Ibn Zuhr and his reliance on experimentation in surgery not only popularised tracheostomy for upper airway obstruction, but also contributed to surgical training, animal experimentation and evidence based surgery.