Galen studied medicine in Asia Minor and at Alexandria, Egypt, the center of medical study in the ancient world. He believed that empiricism and anatomical exploration were essential to complement medical theory and philosophy. Although it is unknown if Galen dissected any human bodies, he is known to have dissected animals including canines and apes and then extrapolated from lower animal anatomy to human anatomy.

His anatomical and medical theories held great sway in both late antiquity and the medieval period. Early in the sixteenth century, several physicians questioned the validity of Galenic anatomy. The most well-known of the challengers to Galen’s orthodoxy was Andreas Vesalius, whose 1543 publication of *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* challenged Galen’s accuracy and legitimacy, and motivated an entire generation of young anatomists to undertake the same investigations and analysis.