

The first diagnostic tool in medicine.

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Based on the Chapter 'Stethoscope' in the book 'Peeping Inside the Body' By H S Ballal and P D Gupta (2008)

The first diagnostic tool in medicine, lately, has undergone metamorphic changes. Medicine progressed with the progress in physical and biological sciences.

In the past, medical man had no tools for diagnostic health disorders. Early man, like most animals, must have used sense organs to diagnose diseases. Gross examination by the eyes and pulsating blood flow in the blood vessels was only available diagnostic methods. Nutritional and intuitional therapies must have been used in the past. In 1816, the French scientist, Rene--Theophile--Hyacinthe Laennec developed the concept of stethoscope (Greek word, stethos = the chest and Skope = examination) used in aid of diagnosing certain diseases of heart and blood vessels, lung liver and intestine. The stethoscope is able to transmit certain sounds and exclude others.

Acoustic stethoscopes are familiar to most people. They operate on the transmission of sound from the chest piece via air filled hollow tubes to the listener's ears. Electronic stethoscopes overcome the low sound levels in acoustic stethoscopes by amplifying body sounds and therefore can be expected that within a few years, the electronic stethoscopes will have eclipsed acoustic devices.

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Prof .Tim Leighton at the Institute of Sound and Vibration Research at Southampton University, decided to see whether the echoes produced by the shock waves could be interpreted in someway.

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Title Annotation: Original Article

Publication: [Advances in Medical and Dental Sciences](#)

Geographic Code: 1USA

Date: [Sep 1, 2008](#)

Words: 379

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Smart stethoscopes are used to hear sounds of the kidney stone; when it is intact sound given off is a 'trick'. When the stone has been successfully broken down by treatment have showed promising results, small pieces the sound changes to a 'tock' .Thus saving patients unnecessary repeat therapy and X-ray monitoring.

Prof Leighton said: " It's a bit like the man on the railway who walks along the length of the train, hitting the metal wheels with a hammer to find out if any are cracked. If the wheel is cracked it gives a duller sound."

"What we are looking with lithotripsy is a stone to go from being intact at the start of kidney treatment." " It's been superbly successful. I have been astounded by how effective it is act as a monitor." Plus, it's completely noninvasive.

It does not expose you to any radiation." Leighton said.

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