THE HUMAN BODY IS STILL REVEALING ITS SECRETS!

The new year 2017 began with the confirmation of a mysterious new organ in our digestive system. Called mesentery, it was for a long time thought to be made up of fragmented, separate structures. But researchers from the University Hospital Limerick in Ireland have shown that it is actually one, continuous organ.

Mesentery is a double fold of peritoneum—the lining of the abdominal cavity that attaches our intestine to the wall of our abdomen. While among the earliest descriptions of the mesentery was one by Leonardo da Vinci, for centuries it was ignored as an insignificant attachment. Over the past century, doctors who studied the mesentery assumed it was a fragmented structure made of separate sections, and hence not very important.

But in 2012, researchers showed that the mesentery was actually a continuous structure, and after four years of gathering further evidence they classified the mesentery as a distinct organ. They published their findings in The Lancet Gastroenterology & Hepatology. With further investigations of the function of the mesentery the researchers hope to work out the role it plays in abdominal diseases.

Even though humans evolved thousands of years ago, have been studying the anatomy of our bodies for hundreds of years, and despite doctors and surgeons having ripped it apart over the ages, the human body has still not stopped revealing its mysteries.

It was only recently that researchers from the Duke University Medical Center in USA discovered that the appendix—long ridiculed as being useless—is in fact a “safe house” for beneficial bacteria living in the human gut. The researchers found that after a bout of diarrhoea the beneficial bacteria hiding in the appendix emerge to repopulate the gut. This finding was published online in the Journal of Theoretical Biology.

And some time back, another discovery published in Nature shook up the scientific community. Researchers at the University of Virginia’s School of Medicine in USA discovered a system of vessels in the human brain hiding behind a major blood vessel. They were dubbed the “central nervous system lymphatic vessels”, which drain lymphatic fluid from the brain to the surrounding lymph nodes. They are found in the dural sinuses. Researchers are excited about the role this discovery may play in understanding and treating many disorders, including multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer’s, and autism.

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The same year, in June 2013, a microscopic layer was found in the human cornea. Its discovery shook up the scientific community. Researchers at the University of Virginia’s School of Medicine in USA discovered a system of vessels in the human brain hiding behind a major blood vessel. They were dubbed the “central nervous system lymphatic vessels”, which drain lymphatic fluid from the brain to the surrounding lymph nodes. They are found in the dural sinuses. Researchers are excited about the role this discovery may play in understanding and treating many disorders, including multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer’s, and autism.

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There seem to be a lot more unrevealed mysteries hiding in our bodies than we care to imagine. Hopefully, further revelations will lead to greater understanding of the human body leading to newer ways to lessen the miseries that afflict us.