Splanchnology Encyclopedia Article

Splanchnology

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Splanchnology

Splanchnology is that branch of **anatomy** devoted to the study of the viscera. The internal body structure of vertebrates, including that of humans, is divided by anatomists into two cavities, the dorsal cavity (containing only the **brain** and **spinal cord**) and the ventral cavity. The ventral cavity is further subdivided by the **diaphragm** muscle into the thoracic (chest) cavity and abdominopelvic cavity. The **organs** contained by the dorsal and ventral body cavities--that is, in the chest and abdomen--are the viscera.

The term splanchnology is at the same level of medical generality as **osteology** (study of the bones), syndesmology (study of the **joints**), or **neurology** (study of the nervous system). However, since the viscera include the **heart**, digestive system, **respiratory system**, and urogenital organs, splanchnology is too broad to be an actual field of study. Textbooks are not written about splanchnology as such. It is, rather, a term of convenience--a quick way of indicating the study of all that part of the body that does not include the skin, skeleton, nervous system, and other non-visceral parts.

Some definitions of the visceral organs studied by splanchnology, such as that used by the classic *Gray's Anatomy of the Human Body*, exclude the heart.