A medico-historical approach to neurology through war

War Neurology

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CONTENTS

Preface: Tatu, L.; Bogousslavsky, J.

Early Neurology and War

Neurology and War: From Antiquity to Modern Times: Paciaroni, M.; Arnao, V.

Neurosurgical Work during the Napoleonic Wars: George James Guthrie’s Experience: Roux, F.-E.

War as a Factor of Neurological Progress

Impact of 20th Century Wars on the Development of Neurosurgery: Dowdy, J.; Pait, T.G.

Elaboration of the Visual Pathways from the Study of War-Related Cranial Injuries; The Period from the Russo-Japanese War to World War I: Lanska, D.J.

Publications on Peripheral Nerve Injuries during World War I: A Dramatic Increase in Knowledge: Koehler, P.J.

The Influence of the Two World Wars on the Development of Rehabilitation for Spinal Cord Injuries in the United States and Great Britain: Lanska, D.J.

Traumatic Brain Injury Studies in Britain during World War II: Lanska, D.J.

Neurologists during Wars

Neurology and Neurologists during the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871): Walusinski, O.

Silas Weir Mitchel: Neurologists and Neurology during the American Civil War: Boller, F.; Birnbaum, D.

French Neurologists during World War I: Walusinski, O.; Tatu, L.; Bogousslavsky, J.

German Emergency Care in Neurosurgery and Military Neurology during World War II, 1939–1945: Stahnisch, F.W.

War Neuropsychiatry: Soldiers’ Experiences

Nostalgia in the Army (17th–19th Centuries): Battesti, M.

Neuropsychiatric Disturbances, Self-Mutilation and Malingering in the French Armies during World War I: War Strain or Cowardice?: Tatu, L.; Bogousslavsky, J.

Neurological Impact of World War I on the Artistic Avant-Garde: The Examples of André Breton, Guillaume Apollinaire and Blaise Cendrars: Bogousslavsky, J.; Tatu, L.

Neurology in Total War

The Central Role of Neuroscientists under National Socialism: Zeidman, L.A.

What’s in a Name? Neurological Eponyms of the Nazi Era: Kondziella, D.; Zeidman, L.A.

Contemporary Aspects

Neurology in the Vietnam War: Gunderson, C.H.; Daroff, R.B.

Neurotoxic Weapons and Syndromes: Carota, A.; Calabrese, P.; Bogousslavsky, J.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder among French Armed Forces Members in Afghanistan: A New Approach: Paul, F.; Marimoutou, C.; Pommier de Santi, V.; Clervoy, P.

Author Index/Subject Index

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Fascinating insights into the relationship between brain disease and creativity

The study of how a neurological disorder can change the artistic activity and behavior of creative people is a largely unexplored field. This publication looks closer at famous painters, writers, composers and philosophers of the 18th to the 20th centuries who suffered from neurological diseases such as stroke, epilepsy, brain trauma and dementia. The diseases of Gershwin, Kant, Musorgsky, Poe, Ravel, Van Gogh and many more are diagnosed in retrospect and treatment options according to modern medical technologies are discussed.

This volume presents more writers, philosophers, musicians, painters and film directors who developed some form of neurological dysfunction and whose style and output changed following a stroke or other cerebral disorder. Mozart, Baudelaire, de Kooning, Proust, Füssli, Heine, Fellini, Visconti and others are all striking examples of how extraordinary creativity can be challenged and modified or destroyed and restored, all within the drama of a disease.

The third part of Neurological Disorders in Famous Artists presents painters, musicians, and writers who had to fight against an acute or chronic neurological disease. Sometimes this fight was without success (e.g. Shostakovich, Schumann, Wolf, Pascal), but often a dynamic and paradoxical creativity of the clinical disorder was integrated into their artistic production (e.g. Klee, Ramuz).
Hysteria is probably the condition which best illustrates the tight connection between neurology and psychiatry. While it has been known since antiquity, its renewed studies during the 19th century were mainly due to the work of Jean-Martin Charcot and his school in Paris. This publication focuses on these early developments, in which immediate followers of Charcot, including Babinski, Freud, Janet, Richer, and Gilles de la Tourette were involved.

Not only does literature offer a creative and humane look at disorders of the brain and mind, but just as authors have been inspired by medicine and real disorders, clinicians have also gained knowledge from literary depictions of the disorders they encounter in their daily practice. This book provides an amazing and fascinating look at neurological conditions, patients, and doctors in literature and film in a way which is both nostalgic and novel.

Jean-Martin Charcot, the iconic 19th century French scientist, is still regarded today as the most famous and celebrated neurologist in the world. Despite the development of strong independent schools of thought in the USA, UK and Germany, his ‘Salpêtrière’ school has become symbolic of the early development and rise of neurological practice and research. This book presents a fresh look at the origins of nervous system medicine, and at the fate of Charcot’s school and pupils.
Interest in the history of neurological science has increased significantly during the last decade, but the significance of war has been overlooked in related research. In contrast, this book highlights war as a factor of progress in neurological science. Light is shed on this little-known topic through accounts given by neurologists in war, experiences of soldiers suffering from neurological diseases, and chapters dedicated to neurology in total and contemporary war.

Written by experts, the contributions in this book focus on the Napoleonic Wars, the American Civil War, the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, World Wars I and II, and recent conflicts such as Vietnam or Afghanistan.

Comprehensive yet concise and accessible, this book serves as a fascinating read for neurologists, neurosurgeons, psychiatrists, historians, and anyone else interested in the history of neurology.