Glimpses of the History of Surgery in Switzerland

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Founded 1913.

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Do you sometimes feel like an airplane pilot when practicing surgery?
Many ways to approach history

E. g. approach through:

- Nowadays practice
- Institutions
- Historical persons and practices
1) Approaching Swiss surgical history through eponyms

- Kocher Tweezers („Kocher-Klemme“) (and many other Kocher-eponyms!)

- Theodor Kocher, Bern (1841-1917)

- SGC/SCC president 1913-1916
Swiss surgical history in eponyms

- The Roux operation / Roux Y bypass / Roux anastomosis (and others)

- César Roux, Lausanne (1857-1934)

- SGC/SSC president 1916-1918
Swiss surgical history in eponyms

- *De Quervain’s disease*

- Fritz de Quervain, (Basel) Bern (1868-1940)

- SGC/SSC president 1918-1920
Swiss surgical history in eponyms

- **Saegesser sign**

- Frédéric Saegesser, Lausanne (1916-1998)

- SGC/SSC president 1972-1974
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Swiss surgical history in eponyms

- *Allgöwer suture* (Allgöwer Naht)

- Martin Allgöwer, Basel (1917-2007)

- SGC/SCC president 1976-78
History through eponyms?

The danger of a narrow perspective
2) Approaching Swiss Surgical History through Institutions

A telling story from the foundation period of the SGC/SCC
Kocher’s inaugural speech in 1913

“Dass die Chirurgen jederzeit es verstanden haben, ausser der Technik das ärztliche Wissen zu fördern, das bezeugt ihr Anteil an den grössten Entdeckungen der älteren und neueren Zeit, wie Blutstillung, Narkose, Asepsis, Bedeutung der Blutdrüsen, und an der Förderung unserer Kenntnisse in der Therapie innerer Krankheiten. Wenn das Gros der praktizierenden Chirurgen lange Zeit auf Grund wesentlich anatomischer Kenntnisse die Behandlung oberflächlicher Krankheiten des Körpers und der Extremitäten betrieben hat, so sind die Chirurgen jetzt die wahren Internen geworden weil sie aufgrund des Studiums der physiologischen Tätigkeit innerer Organe sich deren Therapie erobert und zugänglich gemacht haben, und im Innern des Körpers dank ihren Eingriffen am Gehirn, Lungen, Herz, Magen und Nieren oft besser Bescheid wissen als die offiziellen Internisten.”
Kocher’s citation of 1913 in an English nutshell: Surgeons as „real internists“

- Surgeons have seriously contributed to the progress of medical knowledge (e.g. anaesthesia, asepsis, „blood glands” and therapy of internal diseases).

- While conquering the therapy of organs deeper inside the body (brain, lungs, heart, kidneys), while being well informed about these regions through
Establishing surgery – promoting appendectomy
3) Approaching Swiss surgical history through persons and practices
Example 1: César Roux (1857-1934) - Lausanne

Harvey Cushing on César Roux (around 1900):

„Roux is a rough diamond ..., who had worked his way into the best clinics of Switzerland. He is a worker. He spent six to seven hours a day in his clinics usually beginning at 7 a.m. He is perhaps best known for his goitre operations and gastro-entrectomy.
Example 1:
César Roux and the surgery of his period

- Practice based on empiricism and pragmatism
- Carried out by adventurous pioneers
- Roux relied on his keen mind and the craft techniques he had learned at Kocher’s clinic.
Example 2: Martin Allgöwer (1917-1997) – Chur/Basel

Co-Founder of the AO-Foundation (Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Osteosynthesefragen)

Represents together with his AO-colleagues a different type of surgery:

Transgressing contradictive empiricism with basic scientific research

System of detailed documentation
Modern surgery as a system of control technologies (Schlich)
Surgeons and pilots

“The history of the experience of the surgeon is not unlike that of people in many other occupations in the twentieth century (...). Aviation, which is practically contemporary with modern surgery, began as a relatively single-handed practice, using fairly simple technologies. It was an unregulated occupation, dangerous to pilot and passenger alike. Daring and courage were numbered among the aviator’s virtues (...). Pilots were heroes. Today aviation is big business.
Conclusion:

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20th Century surgeons in the Historical Dictionary of Switzerland (HLS)

Allgöwer, Martin (1917-2007)
Bernhard, Oskar (1861-1939)
Bürgi, Konrad (1874-1945)
Bürgi, Urs (1909-1989)
Brunner, Conrad (1859-1927)
Brunner, Alfred (1890-1972)
Bircher, Eugen (1882-1956)
Bircher, Heinrich (1850-1923)
Bucher, Rudolf (1899-1971)
Clairmont, Paul (1875-1942)
Clément, Gustave (1868-1940)
Courvoisier, Ludwig Georg (1843-1918)
Decker, Pierre (1892-1967)
Demiéville, Paul (1855-1947)
Dunant, Jean Henri (1834-1923)
Flury, Andreas (1853-138)
Garré, Carl (1857-1928)
Gelpke, Ludwig (1854-1946)
Girard, Charles (1850-1916)
Grob, Max (1901-1976)
Häberlin, Hermann (1862-1938)
Junod, Marcel (1904-1961)
Kocher, Albert (1872-1941)
Kocher, Theodor (1841-1917)
König, Bernhard (1914-2011)
Krayenbühl, Hugo (1902-1985)
Lanz, Otto (1865-1935)
Lardy, Edmond (1859-1935)
Lenggenhager, Karl (1903-1989)
Martin, Charles (1878-1948)
Merke, Franz (1893-1975)
Muheim, Edwin (1907-1988)
Müller, Maurice E. (1918-2009)
Neff, Giacomo (1905-1994)
Nissen, Rudolf (1896-1981)
Olivier, Charlotte (1864-1945)
Patry, Georges (1882-1956)
Quervain, Fritz de (1868-1940)
Rollier, Auguste (1874-1954)
Roux, César (1857-1934)
Ruppanner, Ernst (1876-1950)
Saegesser, Frédéric (1916-1998)
Sauerbruch, Ferdinand (1875-1951)
Schlatter, Carl (1864-1934)
Schulthess, Wilhelm (1855-1917)
Schumacher, Emil D. (1880-1914)
Senning Ake (1915-2000)
Spengler, Lucius (1858-1923)
Tavel, Ernst (1858-1912)
Verdan, Claude (1909-2006)
Willenegger, Hans (1910-1998)
Zweifel, Paul (1848-1927)
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