

# MEDICAL CURIOSITIES

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Anybody infected by the humour of Ash and Lake's Bizarre Books (particularly Chapter 4, "The Right Person for the Job") will be continually on the lookout for similar bibliographic anomalies. Working in a medical library, I have developed the habit of collecting references in which the author's name fits like a surgical glove onto the title of his work.

Thumbing through Garrison and Morton's medical bibliography and Bowker's books in print, I discovered that Soranus, the second-century Greek author of On Midwifery, was one of the first to discuss inflammation of the rectum during pregnancy. The German Ernst Von Bumm did research on the gonococcus in venereal disease, and his contemporary, Ernst Finger, was a pioneer in gonorrhoeal discharge of the vagina. The anatomist Adolf Fick (allow for the Middle High German vocalic sound shift) studied heat production during muscular activity, and his namesake, Rudolph Fick, concentrated on the myological action of the pelvis in males. In England, Alfred Tubby published his Deformities while William Little wrote "On the Nature and Treatment of Deformities of the Human Frame". One of the first psychiatrists was William Battie, who issued his Treatise on Madness in 1758. Timothy Bright composed a Treatise of Melancholie, and Thomas Trotter wrote the first book on alcoholism and its effects on the human body. Fielding's friend, John Freke, is remembered for his article on "A Case of Extraordinary Exostoses on the Back of a Boy". In America, Karen Horney published her Feminine Psychology, Gene Starbuck his Models of Human Sexuality, and Julius Fast The Body Language of Sex, Power and Aggression.

In modern times, significant research appears not in monographs but in the vast maze of published journal articles. A search of the MEDLINE database of the world's medical literature reveals there is a British gynaecologist Raper, an Australian midwife Ripper, a Dutch obstetrician Naaktgeboren (born naked), a Russian infertility specialist Semenova, a German cancer therapist Quack, husband and wife geneticists P. and T. Rabbits, a bacteriologist Buggs, a dermatologist Boyle, a haematologist Blood, an orthopedist Bone, a gastroenterologist Gut, a neurologist Brain, and an Italian stomatologist called Orefici. There is a Chinese obstetrician K. Cong, a Baltimore surgeon A. Munster, a behavioural psychologist Frankenstein, and even a medico named Mengele, studying blood levels of kidney transplant patients in Switzerland.

I have unearthed some forty articles in which the surname of the author or co-author seems appropriate to the title itself:

- Cerebral Oxygenation During Recurrent Seizures, by T. J. Sick
- Competing for Medi-cal Business: Why Hospitals Did, and Did Not Get Contracts, by W. Price
- The Ward Sister -- Nurse, Manager, or Teacher?, by A. Ward
- Local Circuitry of Identified Projection Neurons in Cat Visual Cortex Brain Slices, by L. C. Katz
- The Effect of Methacholine Inhalation Challenge on Regional Residual Volume in Patients With Subclinical Asthma, by J. R. Horsley
- How Americans Say They Drink: Preliminary Data From Two Recent National Surveys, by N. Munch and J. Coakley
- Doppler Color Flow Mapping of the Fetal Heart, by J. P. Youngblood
- Female Genital Mutilation, by L. P. Cutner
- The Management of Recurrent Colorectal Cancer, by M. Killingback
- The Course of Affective Disorders, by J. Angst
- Genetic Variation in AIDS Viruses, by J. M. Coffin
- Electrocoagulation in the Arrest of Gastrointestinal Hemorrhage, by A. G. Shitov
- Hematoma of the Rectus Sheath Complicated by an Acute Abdomen, by A. Shita
- Crohn Disease of Penile and Scrotal Skin, by A. G. Cockburn
- Normal and Abnormal Bowel Function, by H. Bottomley
- Dose Effects of Raw Soybean Flour on Pancreatic Growth, by R. A. Crass and P. S. Oates
- Bowel Obstruction in Patients With Ovarian Cancer: A Search For Prognostic Factors, by R. J. Seymour
- The Acute Effects of Coffee and Caffeine on Human Interdigestive Exocrine Pancreatic Secretion, by R. J. Coffey
- A Case of Sudden Death as the Result of an Overdose of Berotek, by I. V. Popov
- Effect of Tobacco Consumption on Semen Quality of a Population of Hypofertile Males, by R. K. Dikshit
- Errors in Blood Glucose Determination, by M. Deadman
- Gallstone Pancreatitis, by H. H. Stone
- Hygienic Aspects of the Study and Prevention of Acute Intestinal Infections, by A. P. Shitskova
- Psychological Stress and the Passage of a Standard Meal Through the Stomach and Small Intestine in Man, by K. Swallow
- Kinetics of Trichloroethylene in Repeated Exposure of Volunteers, by A. Monster
- Role of Crystalloid Solutions in Supplementing Massive Transfusions, by M. Vlad
- Incidence of Multiple Pregnancy After In-vitro Fertilisation and Embryo Transfer, by P. J. Quinn
- A Program Using Medical Students to Teach High School Students About AIDS, by A. Gay, Jr.
- Pesticides in Ground Water Beneath Irrigated Farmland in Nebraska, by G. A. Junk
- ABC of AIDS, by M. Spittle
- New Rectal-Mucosal Biopsy Forceps, by J. H. Butt
- First Aid. When Casualties Are Critical, by M. Bangs

- Preparation of Sex Education Programs at a Local Level, by Y. Fukuhara and K. Fukuda  
 Morphometric and Radiographic Characteristics of Tibial Bone of Broiler Chickens With Twisted Leg Disorders, by J. J. Cruickshank  
 Smoking and Lung Cancer, by C. R. Ash  
 Single-Dose Prophylaxis in Gynaecological Surgery, by G. J. Pricker  
 Ventilation in Operating Rooms, by R. Blowers  
 The Use of Drugs in Swimming, by J. C. Puffer  
 Staging and Surgery in Testicular Cancer, by O. Schmucki  
 Testicular Syphilis, by F. Wart

### **WASPLEG AND OTHER MNEMONICS**

*Why WASPLEG? Well, suppose you are challenged to name the seven deadly sins and don't have a reference book handy; this mnemonic reminds you of the initial letters of Wrath, Avarice, Sloth, Pride, Lust, Envy, and Gluttony. Bart Benne's 1988 book with the above title, issued in paperback by Taylor Publishing of Dallas for \$7.95, contains hundreds of such memory aids, including the astronomical one I sprung on my wife-to-be during an early date: O, Be A Fine Girl, Kiss Me Right Now (listing the spectral types of stars from hot to cool). (She wasn't amused.) Famous mnemonics include the memorization of pi using sentences whose word-lengths mimic its digits (Sir, I send a rhyme excelling...), the I-before-E-except-after-C spelling rule, and the R months for eating oysters.*

*The mnemonics in this book seem mainly of use to students cramming for a test or contestants preparing for Jeopardy. Why learn the English monarchs in order when you can look them up? What is needed in the field of mnemonics is the systematic development of methods for building your own, for remembering telephone numbers and the like. In crafting a mnemonic, one must balance efficiency (the ratio of the number of letters in the mnemonic to the number of letters in the item to be recalled) against memorability; most acrostics favor the latter, requiring whole sentences to commit a handful of letters to memory. (If the order doesn't matter, one can often anagram the letters and achieve a more compressed format, as WASPLEG demonstrates.) Are initial letters enough, or should two or three letters of each word be placed in the mnemonic? If several letters, which ones? What sort of information other than word-lists or number sequences lend themselves to mnemonics? How should one tailor the mnemonic to the type of information? In the field of mnemonics there are many more questions than answers.*