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History of Neurology

Jean-Louis Brachet (1789–1858). A forgotten contributor to early 19th century neurology

Ses contributions méconnues à la neurologie au début du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle

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### Abstract

Specialists of the history of hysteria know the name of Jean-Louis Brachet (1789–1858), but few realise the influence of this physician and surgeon from Lyon, a city in the southeastern part of France. Not only a clinician, he was also a neurophysiology researcher in the early 19th century. Along with his descriptions of meningoencephalitis, including hydrocephalus and meningoencephalitis, he elucidated the functioning of the vegetative nervous system and described its activity during emotional states. He also helped describe the different forms of epilepsy and sought to understand their aetiologies, working at the same time as the better-known Louis-

Florentin Calmeil (1798–1895). We present a biography of this forgotten physician, a prolific writer, keen clinical observer and staunch devotee of a rigorous scientific approach.

## Resumé

Si le nom de Jean-Louis Brachet (1789–1858) reste familier à ceux qui s'intéressent à l'histoire de l'hystérie, ils connaissent l'activité de ce médecin et chirurgien lyonnais qui, au début du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, sait à la fois un médecin clinicien et un chercheur en neuro-physiologie. À la suite de sa description des méningo-encéphalites, notamment tuberculeuses, il met en évidence le fonctionnement du système nerveux végétatif et décrit son activité lors des émotions. Il participe à la description des différentes formes d'épilepsies et recherche leurs étiologies, en contemporain du plus célèbre Louis-Florentin Calmeil (1798–1895). Nous présentons ici une biographie de ce médecin connu, écrivain prolifique, doué d'un talent d'observation clinique accrédité, chevillé à une foi scientifique rigoureuse.



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## Keywords

History of neurology; Brachet; Vegetative nervous system; Meningoencephalitis; Epilepsia; Hydrocephalus; Hysteria

## Mots clés

Histoire de la neurologie; Brachet; Système nerveux végétatif; Méningoencéphalite; Épilepsie; Hydrocéphalie; Hystérie

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