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Walter Essex Wynter, Quincke, and lumbar puncture

Though Quincke's name is usually attached to the
procedure of lumbar puncture, and rightly so, Walter
Wynter, in the same year, devised a comparable if
cruuder technique.

Walter Essex Wynter (1860-1945) was educated at
Epsom College, and the Middlesex Hospital.

He was the son of a general practitioner, Andrew
Wynter, who practised in Chiswick and who edited
the British Medical Journal (1855-61). Walter Wynter
was FRCP and FRCS, becoming a physician to the
Middlesex hospital in 1901.

While a registrar, he reported in The Lancet four
cases of CSF aspiration in meningitis. Case 1 was a
boy aged three years, treated in February 1889 with
meningitis following an ear infection. Case 2, treated
in February 1890, was an 11-year-old girl; case 3 was
a two-year-old boy and case 4 was a 13-month-old
girl: the last three were all tuberculous.

Wynter made a small incision at L2, cut down to
the dura, then inserted a Southey's tube with a rubber
drainage to withdraw the infected fluid and reduce the
pressure. The procedure afforded but short-lived relief
and all four patients died. (Southey's tubes were still
in occasional use in 1960, and were used to relieve
gross dropsy in the legs which were left dependent
overnight to drain litres of oedema fluid into a large
bucket.)

Heinrich Ireneaus Quincke (1842-1922) was the
son of a physician who practised in Berlin. He was
born in Frankfurtaan-der-Oder, read medicine at
Berlin, Würzburg and Heidelberg, becoming MD in
1863. Much influenced by his teacher Friederich
Frerichs in Berlin, he took the Chairs in Berne and
then in Kiel.

He studied gastrointestinal disorders, advocated
surgery for lung abscess, and observed the angio-
œdema of anaphylaxis, referred to as Quincke's
œdema. He observed the pulsation of nailbed capil-
laries in aortic regurgitation (Quincke's sign).

Studying the CSF in dogs and rabbits, he injected the
red sulphide of mercury into the subarachnoid space
to demonstrate the flüssigkeit or flow, in 1872. At Kiel
he was concerned with the severe headaches associ-
ated with hydrocephalus and one month before
Wynter's Lancet paper, he reported his first lumbar
puncture in "Ueber hydrocephalus", to the Tenth
Congress of Internal Medicine at Wiesbaden in April
1891.1

Case 1 was a boy of 12 years who died despite six
punctures of the ventricles via a trephine, performed
in 1888. Case 2 was a boy aged one year nine months,
comatose with suspected tubercular meningitis. He
performed three lumbar punctures at three-day inter-
vals in December 1890:

1 I punctured the subarachnoid space in the lumbar
area, passing a very fine cannula 2 cm. deep
between the third and fourth lumbar spinal arches
and drop by drop I drained a few cubic centimetres
of watery fluid...one could see clearly increases with
expiration and decrease with inspiration.

The child recovered and the nature of the meningi-
tis or meningism remains uncertain. Case 3 was a man
with chronic hydrocephalus aged 25, who suffered
from severe headaches. These were relieved by lumbar
puncture, but again the aetiology was not established.

By 21 September, 1891 his paper included lumbar
puncture in five children and five adults. He acknowl-
edged Wynter's work.

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paracentesis was performed for the relief of fluid pres-

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Walter Essex Wynter, Quincke, and lumbar puncture.

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