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Armand Trousseau and Parkinson's disease

Armand Trousseau (1801–1867) was a distinguished French physician who worked in the Hôpital St Antoine in Paris. Best known for his description of venous thrombosis as a possible signal of a visceral cancer, he observed this in himself, confirming his suspicion of gastric carcinoma.

Of neurological interest and importance is his contribution to Parkinson's disease in his *Lectures on Clinical Medicine*.¹ He described (1861, later translated in 1868) rigidity, a sign Parkinson did not pay attention to, and he explained the *scelotyrbie festinans*: “as his centre of gravity is thus displaced, he is obliged to run after himself, as it were, so that he keeps trotting and hopping on.” Trousseau also described the progressive slowing of repeated hand opening, the first clear account of bradykinesia. Although James Parkinson had said “the senses and intellects being uninjured”, Trousseau commented: “the intellect. . . gets weakened at last; the patient loses his memory, and his friends notice soon that his mind is not as clear: precocious caducity sets in.” Trousseau was a realist. He had, he said, not cured a single patient with medicaments; pneumonia was the common ending.

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