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Early descriptions of cluster headache

Priority for description of cluster headache or periodic migrainous neuralgia is a source of polemic. Much depends upon the stringency of criteria applied. Hierons' refers to Thomas Willis (1621-1675) who described a venerable matron who began to suffer every afternoon at 4 o'clock from recurring severe headache.

In 1747 Joannes Christoph Ulricus Oppermann published his little acknowledged *Dissertatio Medica Inauguralis*, entitled *Hemicrania Horologica* which may be the first account² of the variant, chronic paroxysmal hemicrania, to which I will refer in a later piece.

Benjamin Hutchinson's description of "neuralgia spasmodica" is often cited as the original account of cluster headache: with attacks every 24 hours, but lasting for several hours. The nature of these attacks is dubious, and some were probably tic douloureux.

Romberg in his classic Manual³ records: *painful sensations in the eye, confined to one side and excited by rays of light and visual effort . . . The pupil is contracted. The eye generally weeps and becomes red. These symptoms occur in paroxysms, of a uniform and irregular character, and isolated or combined with facial neuralgia and hemicrania.* Romberg's emphasis on the photophobia⁴ is incongruous with current concepts, but he was clearly observing a condition closely akin to cluster headache.

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