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NEUROLOGICAL STAMP

Pierre Joseph Pelletier (1788–1842) and Jean Bienaime Caventou (1795–1887)

The French chemist Pelletier’s major work was the investigation of drugs, which he began in 1809. Later he worked with the pharmacist and organic chemist Caventou. Their collaborative studies, which began in 1817, included the isolation of strychnine from nux vomica (1818), caffeine (1821), and quinine from cinchona bark (1820). It was not until 1936 that Wolff reported on the effectiveness of quinine in relieving myotonia. Later, in 1955, Geschwind and Simpson noted the “quinine-like” action of procarbamide on repetitive firing of cardiac muscle and suggested that it might be effective in combating myotonia.

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38 Gardiner PV, Griffiths ID. Sudden death after treatment with pulsed methylprednisolone. BMJ 1990;300:125.