

Who was the Red Dean?

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The subject of this neurognostics question lived in revolutionary times, being active in – roughly – the first half of the nineteenth century in France. He is quite well known among neurologists, but perhaps his fame is even larger among cardiologists. Yet, little has been written about his personal life. He interned with the French physician René-Joseph Bertin (1757–1828) and assisted him with the publication of his book on heart diseases, *Traité des maladies du coeur et des gros vaisseaux* [Treatment of heart diseases and of the large vessels], published in 1824. It would remain a favorite topic of his, and his name is still recognized by modern cardiologists. He also investigated the consequences of apoplexy. He described the effects of brain lesions on behavior, both from literature and from his own patients. He opposed Pierre Flourens' (1794–1867) view of the functioning of the brain. The latter had formulated a theory that the brain was organized in the form of these two principles, *action propre* and *action commune*. The first states that each part of the central nervous system has its own function. The second makes an exception for the cerebral cortex, which is supposed to function as a whole, realizing the *MOI* [me, myself]. Our subject also performed experimental studies to prove the correctness of his view of localized functions within discrete areas of the cerebral cortex.

While his role in the aphasia and localization discussion is well known, the fact that he also wrote about amnesia has been overlooked. In 1848, he became Dean of the Medical Faculty of Paris, but he soon had to resign.

Questions

- (1) Who is this Red Dean?
- (2) Which cardiovascular disorder is specifically associated with his name?
- (3) What were his objections to Flourens' theory and what alternative did he propose?
- (4) His views were based on case studies, but he also performed some experimental studies. What kind of studies did he perform and what did these studies show?
- (5) What was his view on amnesia?
- (6) What was the reason for resigning shortly after becoming Dean of the Medical Faculty?

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