

The medical medal collection of the Spanish Society of Neurology's Historical Archive

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ABSTRACT

The medal collection that the Spanish Society of Neurology's Historical Archive has received as part of the bequest by Drs. Antonio and Manuel Subirana includes 23 die-struck pieces representing scientific encounters, prominent figures, and institutional events. Some of the most important pieces include the medal struck for the 5th International Congress of Neurology (Lisbon, 7-12 September, 1953) and honouring Santiago Ramón y Cajal and Constantin von Monakow; the medal featuring Théophile Alajouanine; the centenary medal for the National Hospital at Queen Square; and the medal struck to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Otfried Foerster, whose important contributions to the neurosurgery included using rhizotomy to treat spasticity and cordotomy for chronic pain. Pío del Río-Hortega was also honoured for his contributions to neurohistology. His main topic of research was microglia, and in 1921 he described these structures' mesodermal origin and phagocytic functions in different pathological processes. We present a collection that will be of great interest for historical researchers exploring the fields of medicine and neurology.

KEYWORDS

Medical numismatics, medical medals, international congresses of neurology, Pío del Río-Hortega, Otfried Foerster

The collection of commemorative medals that the SEN Historical Archive received as part of the bequest by Drs Antonio and Manuel Subirana includes 23 die-struck pieces representing scientific encounters, prominent figures, and institutional events. This is a very interesting collection for historical researchers exploring the fields of medicine and neurology.

Commemorative medals, pieces of metal intended for display and with no monetary value,¹ began to be produced in the times of the Roman Empire. They were later revived during the Renaissance by Pisanello (Antonio Pisano, 1395-1455).² The production of medals with medical and scientific themes increased exponentially. Such medals enjoyed great popularity in the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, and large collections, both private and institutional, were created as a result. Exonumia, the discipline within numismatics that studies medals, offers interesting histo-

rical evidence of individual or collective achievements and scientific, institutional, and professional events.³

Collection

Medals commemorating scientific encounters:

- 5th International Congress of Neurology (Lisbon, 7-12 September, 1953). Santiago Ramón y Cajal (1852-1934) and Constantin von Monakow (1853-1930) (Figure 1).
- 7th International Congress of Neurology (Rome, 10-15 September, 1961). Giovanni Mingazzini (1859-1929).
- 5th International Congress of Electroencephalography and Clinical Neurophysiology (Rome, 7-13 September, 1961). Hans Berger (1873-1941).
- 27th International Neurological Meeting (Paris, 30-31 May, 1967). André Thomas (1867-1903).



Figure 1. 5th International Congress of Neurology (Lisbon, 7-12 September, 1953). Santiago Ramón y Cajal (1852-1934) and Constantin von Monakow (1853-1930).

- VIII Symposium Neuroradiologicum (Paris, 24-29 September, 1967). Arthur Schüller (1874-1957), Walter E. Dandy (1886-1946), Erik Lysholm (1891-1947), Jean A. Sicard (1872-1929), Egas Moniz (1874-1955). Antwerp, 1939; Rotterdam, 1949; Stockholm, 1952; London, 1955; Brussels, 1957; Rome, 1961; New York, 1964; Paris, 1967.
- 10th International Congress of Neurology (Barcelona, 8-15 September, 1973). Pío del Río-Hortega (1882-1945) and Otfried Foerster (1873-1941).
- 11th World Congress of Neurology (Amsterdam, 11-16 September, 1977). Cornelis Winkler (1855-1941), C.G.J. Rademaker (1887-1957).

Medals representing prominent figures:

- Frédéric Bremer (1892-1982). Professor at the University of Brussels (1932-1962).
- Joseph Babinski (1857-1932). Hôpital de la Pitié.
- Josep Trueta Raspall (1897-1977). *Humani corporis vulnerum sanator.*
- Paul Castaigne (1916-1988). Clinical professor of nervous diseases (1960-1985). Member of the French National Academy of Medicine.
- Auguste Tournay (1878-1969). *De l'anisocorie dans le regard latéral (la réaction de Tournay).*
- Théophile Alajouanine (1890-1980). *Honneur des Hommes Saint Langage, / Discours prophétique et paré, / Belles chaines en qui s'engage / Le Dieu dans la chair égare...* Paul Valéry (Figure 2).

- Antoni Puigvert Gorro (1905-1990). Fundació Puigvert.
- Santiago Ramón y Cajal (1852-1934). Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine (1906). *Excolere victum hominum.*
- Severo Ochoa de Albornoz (1905-1993). Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine (1959). *Excolere victum hominum.* RNA. DNA.
- Hermenegildo Arruga (1886-1972). *Et facta est Lux.*
- Ignasi Barraquer Barraquer (1884-1965). Institut Universitari Barraquer.
- António Caetano de Abreu Freire Egas Moniz (1874-1955). First professor of neurology at the Lisbon Faculty of Medicine (1911-1944). Homage on the 50th anniversary of his death.

Medals representing institutions:

- College of Physicians and Surgeons. Columbia University. Two hundredth anniversary (1767-1967).



Figure 2. Théophile Alajouanine (1890-1980)



Figure 3. National Hospital, Queen Square. Centenary (1860-1960)

- The National Hospital, Queen Square. Centenary (1860-1960) (Figure 3).
- Faculty of Medicine of the University of Montpellier.
- French oto-neuro-ophthalmology societies (1921-1961). Jean Alexandre Barré (1880-1967)

Medal of the 10th International Congress of Neurology

The 10th International Congress of Neurology was held between the 8th and the 15th September, 1973, in Barcelona's Palau Nacional. The congress was presided over by Antonio Subirana with José María Espadaler as secretary-general. The congress included the following lectures:

1. Iatrogenic neurological diseases. Chair: A. Subirana (Spain); co-chairs: J.D. Spillane (United Kingdom), H.H. Merritt (USA).
2. Tropical neurology. Chairs: J.O. Trelles (Peru), B.O. Osuntokun (Nigeria).
3. Genetic and transmissible dementias. Chairs: G. Alemà (Italy), E. Bay (Germany). We should highlight the lecture by D.C. Gajdusek, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1976 for discovering that kuru could be transmitted from humans to chimpanzees.
4. Myasthenia and myasthenic syndromes. Chair: P. Castaigne (France), co-chairs: I. Hausmanowa (Poland), J.A. Simpson (United Kingdom).
5. Transient ischaemic attacks in cerebrovascular disease. Chairs: V Schmidt (Russia), F. Plum (USA).

At the president's recommendation, the SEN unanimously approved featuring profile portraits of Otfried Foerster (1873-1941) and Pío del Río-Hortega (1882-1945) on the medal of the congress (Figure 4). This medal commemorated the centenary of Otfried Foerster's birth and his neurosurgical contributions of rhizotomy for treating spasticity and cordotomy for chronic pain. Based on his knowledge of physiology and surgery, he was able to create a new map of dermatomes of the human body. Highlights from his biography include being sent for by



Figure 4. 10th International Congress of Neurology (8-15 September, 1973). Pío del Río-Hortega (1882-1945), Otfried Foerster (1873-1941).

the Soviet government to treat Lenin, who had suffered a cerebrovascular accident.⁵

The other profile on the medal, Pío del Río-Hortega, had earned local and international recognition for his work in neurohistology. His research focused on microglia, and in 1921 he published a description of their mesodermal origin and phagocytic functions in different pathological processes. In 1924, German scientists Metz and Spatz published a study on microglia in which they referred to those structures as 'Hortega cells'. The current classification system for central nervous system tumours is based on Pío del Río-Hortega's model, which was published posthumously in Buenos Aires.⁵

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