

# Axel Herbert Olivecrona

Axel Herbert Olivecrona (July 11, 1891 – January 1980) was a Swedish [neurosurgeon](#), credited with founding the field of Swedish neurosurgery, and pioneering developments in modern neurosurgery.

Herbert Olivecrona was born July 11, 1891 in Visby, [Sweden](#), the son of Axel Olivecrona, a district court judge, and Countess Ebba Cristina Mörner af Morlanda. His brother Karl Olivecrona was a noted Swedish legal scholar, and his son Gustaf Olivecrona a Swedish writer and journalist.

In his youth, he was playing elite bandy. He was part of the IFK Uppsala bandy team which in 1912 played a draw in the final against Djurgårdens IF and shared the Swedish championship that year.

Originally attending school in Uppsala, he began studying medicine at the University of [Uppsala](#) in 1909, then transferring to Karolinska Institutet, where he was an assistant in Pathology. He graduated in 1918.

In 1919, Olivecrona received a fellowship from the American-Scandinavian Foundation. This allowed him to engage in experimental work at the Johns Hopkins Institute in Baltimore, Maryland, where he worked with surgery pioneer [Harvey Williams Cushing](#) (1869–1939). Olivecrona was offered a residency, and to be Cushing's foreign assistant on the condition that he work for a year at Pierre Marie's clinic in Paris. Due to financial reasons, Olivecrona declined and returned to Sweden, where, as the only neurosurgeon in the city interested in brain tumors, he established the first neurosurgery program at Serafimer Hospital in the 1920s.

After further consultation with Cushing, Olivecrona improved his skills, and in 1930 was promoted to the position of assistant surgeon in chief, allowing him to establish a 50-bed neurosurgery department.

In 1935, he became the first professor of neurosurgery at the Karolinska Institute, quite likely the first chair of neurosurgery in all of Europe.

Olivecrona was a pioneer in the creation of specific surgical techniques for certain types of brain lesions such as acoustic neuromas, arteriovenous malformations, and berry aneurysms, becoming one of the key neurosurgical instructors in Europe.[5] One of his students, Lars Leksell (1907–1986), went on to make major advances in the development of echoencephalography, and is credited with the invention of radiosurgery.

Among his most famous patients was the Hungarian writer Frigyes Karinthy, whose brain tumor he operated on in 1936. Karinthy put it into a novel titled "A Journey Round my Skull."

In 1955, Olivecrona was elected as a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences. He retired from the Karolinska in 1960 and went into private practice, during which time he also accepted an invitation to travel to Cairo and establish a neurosurgical unit in Egypt. He later co-wrote a neurosurgical handbook, *Handbook der Neurochirurgie*. Olivecrona died in January 1980.

The Herbert Olivecrona Award, also known as the "Nobel Prize of Neurosurgery", is awarded annually by the Karolinska Institute to a neurosurgeon or neuroscientist who has made an outstanding contribution to the neurosurgical field.

Recipients:

John F. Mullan (1976)

Charles G. Drake (1977)

M Gazi Yasargil, 1978

[Leonard Malis](#), 1979

Lindsay Symon, 1980

Charles B. Wilson, 1982

Peter J. Jannetta, 1983

Kenichiro Sugita, 1984

John A. Jane, 1985

Madji Samii, 1987

William H. Sweet, 1989

Graham Teasdale, 1991

Keiji Sano, 1992

Emil Pasztor, 1993

Alan Crockard, 1995

Vinko Dolenc, 1996

[Takanori Fukushima](#), 1997

Michael Apuzzo, 1998

Robert F. Spetzler, 1999

Albert L. Rhoton, 2000

Patrick J. Kelly, 2001

Nicolas de Tribolet, 2002

Matti Vapalahti, 2003

Alexander N. Konovalov, 2004

Björn Meyerson, 2005

Niels-Aage Svendgaard, 2005

Cornelius A. F. Tulleken, 2006

Ross M. Bullock, 2007

[Bernard George](#), 2008

[Michael Fehlings](#), 2009

[Hugues Duffau](#), 2010

[Ossama Al Mefty](#), 2011

[Andres M. Lozano](#), 2012

[Marianne Juhler](#), 2013

# Instruments

Olivecrona silver clip

[Brain spatulas](#), alike to those used by Olivecrona

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Last update: **2024/06/07 02:58**

