

Georg Schaltenbrand

was one of the most prodigious and internationally renowned neurologists in post war Germany. Trained by Max Nonne in Hamburg, he early gained international experience during stays in The Netherlands, the United States, and China. In 1935 quarrels with Nazi representatives forced him to go to Würzburg, where he built an own neurological service. This unit subsequently grew up to an internationally recognized center. Schaltenbrand scientifically contributed to the organization and diagnostics of the motor system, to the physiology and pathology of the cerebrospinal fluid system, and to multiple sclerosis. His textbook and atlas on stereotaxy, authored with his American friend [Percival Bailey](#) in 1959, remained a standard reference in stereotactic surgery until recent years. Only late after his death his unethical scientific activities during wartime came to common public knowledge. In an attempt to confirm his hypothesis of an infectious aetiology of multiple sclerosis, he had inoculated mentally handicapped and other severely ill patients with cerebrospinal fluid of apes putatively suffering from multiple sclerosis and also of patients with verified multiple sclerosis. He explicitly accepted the risk of causing some morbidity and even mortality in his study persons. He published his experiments in several articles and oral presentations since 1940, and, comprehensively, in a monograph 1943. Although commented as early as 1949, his dubious studies were widely ignored until a critical review appeared in an American journal in 1994. Since then, the studies are frequently cited as a typical example of Nazi medical science. However, with due regard to the historical background and the personality of Schaltenbrand his experiments should rather be brought into line with a worldwide practice at that time of using patients as study objects without asking for their consent. As a response to this practice several laws had been adopted, beginning in 1900, carried on in 1931 and culminating 1947 in the Nuremberg code. As a historical fact, not only before but also after World War II these legal acts were widely ignored and became only gradually accepted.

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