

# Giovanni Maria Lancisi



Giovanni Maria Lancisi (26 October 1654 – 20 January 1720) was an Italian physician, epidemiologist and anatomist who made a correlation between the presence of mosquitoes and the [prevalence of malaria](#). He was also known for his studies about cardiovascular diseases, and is remembered in the eponymous Lancisi's sign.

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In the eighteenth century, [Giovanni Maria Lancisi](#) described the [indusium griseum](#) (IG) and the [longitudinal striae](#) (LS) of the [corpus callosum](#).

Lancisi claimed that the seat of the soul and superior cognitive functions should be located in a median and unpaired organ, and favored the corpus callosum as the site of these functions.

Lancisi's anatomic studies were very meticulous, and he provided an excellent description of the corpus callosum and the related structures on its dorsal surface, i.e., the IG and the LS. In the “Dissertatio de sede cogitantis animae” (“Dissertation on the seat of the soul”, published in Latin in 1712) <sup>1)</sup>

“In the superior part of the [corpus callosum](#), I observed one thing completely disregarded or unobserved until now: each medullary transversal fiber is intersected at a right angle to two [nerves](#), which are medullary, round, and have a changeable diameter. These ones are not covered with [dura mater](#), but with the only [arachnoid](#) membrane run along the [corpus callosum](#) forwards and backwards, being almost in contact” <sup>2)</sup>.

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He was educated at the Collegio Romano and the University of [Rome](#), where he qualified in medicine aged 18. He was physician to Popes Innocent XI, Clement XI and Innocent XII. He was given the lost anatomical plates of Bartolomeo Eustachius by Pope Clement XI; these were made in 1562 and had been forgotten in the Vatican Library. Lancisi edited and published them in 1714 as the Tabulae anatomicae.

He studied epidemiology, describing malaria and influenza epidemics. He published De Noxiis Paludum Effluviis (On the Noxious Effluvia of Marshes) in 1717, in which he recognized that mosquito-

infested swamps are the breeding ground for malaria and recommended drainage of these areas to prevent it. He also published extensively on cardiology, describing vegetations on heart valves, cardiac syphilis, aneurysms and the classification of heart disease. His landmark *De Motu Cordis et Aneurysmatibus* was published posthumously in 1728.

<sup>1)</sup>

Lancisi, G. M. (1712). *Dissertatio de sede cogitantis animae*. Venice.

<sup>2)</sup>

Grondona, F. (1965). The dissertation of Giovanni Maria Lancisi about the seat of the rational soul [in Italian]. *Physis*, 7, 401e430.

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