

# Giovanni Verga

The field of [pituitary surgery](#) was born in the first decade of the twentieth century in Europe, and it evolved rapidly with the development of numerous innovative surgical techniques by some of the founding fathers of neurosurgery. This study investigates the pioneering Italian treatise on pituitary surgery, *La Patologia Chirurgica dell'Ipofisi* (Surgical Pathology of the Hypophysis), published in 1911 by Giovanni Verga (1879-1923), a surgeon from Pavia and one of Golgi's disciples. This little-known monograph compiles the earliest experience on pituitary surgery through the analysis of the first 50 procedures performed between 1903 and 1911. We conducted a biographical survey of Giovanni Verga and the motivations for his work on pituitary surgery. In addition, a systematic analysis of all original reports and historical documents about these pituitary procedures referenced in Verga's treatise was carried out. Verga's treatise provides a summary of the techniques employed and surgical outcomes for the first 50 attempted procedures of pituitary tumor removal. This monograph is the only scientific source that includes a complete account of the series of 10 pituitary tumors operated on by Sir Victor Horsley in the 1900s. Three major types of surgery were employed: (i) palliative procedures of craniectomy (n = 6); (ii) transcranial approaches to the pituitary gland, either subfrontal or subtemporal (n = 13); and (iii) transphenoidal routes to expose the sella turcica, either using an upper transnasal-tranethmoidal approach (n = 19) or a lower sublabial/endonasal-transeptal one (n = 12). An operative mortality rate of 36% (n = 17) was observed in these early series. The pathological nature of the tumors operated on was available in 42 cases. There were 28 adenomas and 15 craniopharyngiomas. Sir Victor Horsley (1857-1916) and the Viennese surgeons Anton von Eiselsberg (1860-1939) and Oskar Hirsch (1877-1965) were the leading European figures in the development of pituitary surgery. Giovanni Verga's treatise *La Patologia Chirurgica dell'Ipofisi* is a fundamental, pioneering book in the history of pituitary surgery, a work that compiles the foundations of this field in Europe and the only authoritative source providing a complete record of pituitary procedures performed by Sir Victor Horsley <sup>1)</sup>

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Pascual JM, Mongardi L, Prieto R, Castro-Dufourny I, Rosdolsky M, Strauss S, Carrasco R, Winter E, Mazzeo P. Giovanni Verga (1879-1923), author of a pioneering treatise on pituitary surgery: the foundations of this new field in Europe in the early 1900s. *Neurosurg Rev*. 2017 May 27. doi: 10.1007/s10143-017-0864-6. [Epub ahead of print] Review. PubMed PMID: 28550628.

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