

Lumbar disc herniation history

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The understanding of lumbar spine pathologies made substantial progress at the turn of the twentieth century.

Stienen et al. reviewed the original publication of [Otto Veraguth](#) in [1929](#) reporting on the successful resection of a lumbar disc herniation, published exclusively in the German language. His early report is put into the historical context, and its impact on the understanding of pathologies of the [intervertebral disc](#) (IVD) is estimated. The Swiss surgeon and Nobel Prize laureate [Emil Theodor Kocher](#) was among the first physicians to describe the traumatic rupture of the IVD in [1896](#). As early as [1909](#) [Hermann Oppenheim](#) and Krause published 2 case reports on surgery for a herniated lumbar disc. Goldthwait was the first physician to delineate the etiopathogenesis between annulus rupture, symptoms of sciatica, and neurological signs in his publication of [1911](#). Further publications by Middleton and Teacher in [1911](#) and [Christian Georg Schmorl](#) in [1929](#) added to the understanding of lumbar spinal pathologies.

In [1929](#), the Swiss neurologist Veraguth (surgery performed by Hans Brun) and the American neurosurgeon [Walter Edward Dandy](#) ¹⁾ both published their early experiences with the surgical therapy of a herniated lumbar disc. Veraguth's contribution, however, has not been appreciated internationally to date. The causal relationship between lumbar disc pathology and sciatica remained uncertain for some years to come.

The causal relationship was not confirmed until Mixter and Barr's landmark paper in [1934](#) describing the association of sciatica and lumbar disc herniation, after which the surgical treatment became increasingly popular. Veraguth was among the first physicians to report on the clinical course of a patient with successful resection of a herniated lumbar disc. His observations should be acknowledged in view of the limited experience and literature on this ailment at that time ²⁾.

¹⁾

Dandy WE. Loose cartilage from the intervertebral disc simulating tumour of the spinal cord. Arch Surg. 1929;19:660-72.

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Stienen MN, Surbeck W, Tröhler U, Hildebrandt G. Little-known Swiss contributions to the description, diagnosis, and surgery of lumbar disc disease before the Mixter and Barr era. J Neurosurg Spine. 2013

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