Neurosurgery History

Trepanation was practiced by neolithic man.

Neurosurgery as a speciality arose only during the second half of the 19th century.

Modern Neurosurgery did not start until the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. Before World War II neurosurgery was not generally recognized as an independent medical specialty, in particular not in Europe. This was different from the United States where such independence had developed in a progressive way already.

Its first pioneers were Sir William Macewen, Sir Victor Horsley, Fedor Krause, Antoine Chipault from France, and Ludvig Puusepp from Russia.

The leaders of the second generation were Harvey Cushing, Walter Dandy, Charles Elsberg and Charles Frazier. Mention deserve also Otfried Foerster, Thierry de Martel, Clovis Vincent, René Leriche.

In 1927 nearly every medical school had a well-organized department of neurological surgery. The pioneers have asbaulted barriers of prejudice, inexperience, and technical difficulties almost insurmountable [1].

Since the mid-1950s, neurosurgery has benefited from the remarkable progress due to tremendous advances in neuroimaging techniques, neuroanesthesia, neurostimulation, and brain-computer interfaces, as well as breakthroughs in operating microscopes and surgical instruments. Yet, this specialty has to do with delicate human structures and is hence considered as highly risky by insurance companies.

[1]
Fleming HW. Neurosurgery. Cal West Med. 1927 Mar;26(3):368. PubMed PMID: 18740276; PubMed Central PMCID: PMC1655397.

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