

## Claude François Lallemand (1790–1854)

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Claude-François Lallemand's portrait (Académie des Sciences-Institut de France)

Claude François Lallemand [1–3] was born on 26 January 1790 in Metz, a city of Lorraine, in Eastern France. At school he was not a brilliant pupil, and was mainly good at swimming and skating. After 1 year spent in the Metz hospital, he became a military surgeon, and for more than 2 years he took part in the Spanish War (the so-called Peninsular War) in the army of Joachim Murat (1767–1815), Marshal of France. Leaving the army, he went to Paris in 1811 and began his medical studies. He was appointed *externe* (1812) then *interne* (1813) of the Paris hospitals. At the Hôtel-Dieu he was the disciple of three great surgeons: Guillaume Dupuytren (1777–1835), Joseph Récamier (1774–1852) and Jean-Nicolas Marjolin (1780–1850). There, he was trained in performing autopsies and the principles of pathological anatomy. He gained a doctoral degree in 1818 with a thesis on physiological deductions from pathological alterations [4]. In this study, he paid a major tribute to Hippocrates (ca. 468 BC–370 BC) and also to Philippe Pinel (1745–1826) and Xavier Bichat (1771–1802). For Lallemand, pathology was a better means to the study of physiology than zoology and vivisection, because pathology dealt directly with human beings whereas zoology and vivisection did not:

“My purpose is to prove by facts that pathology is for physiology an as fecund, but much safer, source than zoology and vivisections, and to drive the physiologists' attention to an inexhaustible mine too neglected up to now.”[4].

Lallemand regarded physiology and pathology as inseparable. If one wants to study either discipline in isolation, one can still not avoid the continuous interaction between the two.

Aided by recommendations of Dupuytren and Marjolin, Lallemand was appointed to the chair of clinical surgery at

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the Faculty of Medicine of Montpellier in 1819. He was an atheist, a humanist, a republican and probably a disciple of the revolutionary and pacifist Pierre Leroux (1797–1871). Though not trained in vitalist theories, Lallemand was nevertheless a fervent admirer of Hippocrates (in 1839 he translated the Aphorisms) and so was close to the Montpellier doctrines. Lallemand was highly charitable and appreciated by his patients, who came from all over the world to take his medical advice. He was also a distinguished teacher.

In 1845, succeeding the famous anatomist Gilbert Breschet (1784–1845), Lallemand was elected to the prestigious French Académie des Sciences in its medico-surgical section. Subsequently, he left Montpellier and went back to Paris. Many honours came his way. He was a member of all the European Societies and Academies and an officer of the Légion d'honneur in 1846. He was one of the 35 founders of the Société Médico-Psychologique in 1852. On 23 July 1854, at the age of 64, he died of heart disease in Marseille, in the South of France, and was buried in the Saint-Pierre cemetery.

Lallemand's scientific works [5] were devoted to three main topics: diseases of the nervous system, urogenital pathology, and public education. His anatomo-pathological researches on the encephalon were first published gradually as nine letters, before being put together in three volumes in 1830–1834 [6]. Lallemand was the first to propose that the ramollissement du cerveau (brain softening) resulted from the inflammation of this organ. This view, in keeping with Broussais's doctrine, was in contradiction to the pertinent observations of Léon Rostan (1790–1866) who showed in 1819 [10] that cerebral softenings were distinct from encephalitis and apoplexy and were related to the "ossification of the cerebral arteries" [8].

Lallemand was ahead of his time, also a pioneer in urology and sexology. He studied les pertes séminales involontaires (spermatorrhoea) [7] and in keeping with the

spirit of the times, he held onanism responsible for many intellectual and physical troubles.

In conclusion, even if many of his writings are no longer relevant, Lallemand was a great medical figure of the early 19th century. Roche compared him with the greatest ones:

"The name of the erudite Montpellier professor is linked to brain disease, as well as Corvisart's name to heart disease, Laennec's name to chest disease, and Broussais's name to gastro-intestinal phlegmasies." [9].

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