

The bullet that hit a nerve: the history of Lucja Frey and her syndrome

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Dear Sirs

There have been several recent publications on the history of Frey's syndrome.^{1–3} However, whether the recent contribution, in these pages by N Jacobsen and C Hopkins,⁴ on the life of Lucja Frey provides new biographic information, unavailable in previous reports,^{2,3,5} remains questionable.

Regarding the specific history of Frey's syndrome, we disagree with the historical account given by Jacobsen and Hopkins. They, as well as numerous publications up to 1999, attribute the first description of a case of gustatory sweating and flushing to Duphenix in 1757.⁶ While the main point of studies on the history of medicine is to research old articles, we suspect that Jacobsen and Hopkins may have examined Duphenix's florid description of a parotid fistula following a hunting accident. The reinterpretation of this account may introduce potential bias. We refer the authors to our 1999 paper¹ for an explanation of why the amounts collected from Duphenix's patient could not have corresponded to facial sweating. Until proven otherwise, we hold that some of the cases described by Baillarger⁷ are in fact the first descriptions of Frey's syndrome.

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References

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Authors' reply

Dear Sirs

Thank you for your interest in our paper. We set out to highlight the work of an inspirational female scientist, but, as with any historical account, we appreciate that there are difficulties in determining the accuracy of any reports.

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