

Giovanni Battista Monteggia (1762–1815)

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SUMMARY

Giovanni Battista Monteggia was born in Laverne on the 8th of August 1762. Monteggia started his education in the School of Surgery at the Hospital Maggiore in Milano in 1779. This hospital was called "Big House" and it is one of the oldest medical institutions in Italy. He passed exam in surgery in 1781. Monteggia was promoted to assistant at surgery in Maggiore hospital in 1790. He was among the first who gave a complete clinical description of polio. He described traumatic hip dislocation and special forearm fracture which was named after him. Strictly speaking, a Monteggia fracture is a fracture of the proximal third of the ulna with an anterior dislocation of the radial head. Monteggia became a member of the renewed Institute of Science, Literature and Art in Milano in 1813.

Keywords: Monteggia; forearm fracture; Maggiore hospital

BIOGRAPHY

Giovanni Battista Monteggia was born in Laverne, on the shores of lake Largo Maggiore, on 8th of August 1762 (Figure 1). Father Giovanni Antonio and mother Marianna Vegezzi had two more sons, one of whom was a priest in the carbonates, and the other was a doctor. The father, who worked in regulating road and river traffic, directed his son to study medicine. Therefore Monteggia, who began his education by studying Latin grammar in Pallanza, continued his education in the School of Surgery at the Hospital Maggiore in Milano in 1779. This hospital was called "Big House", one of the oldest medical institutions in Italy. Among others, his teachers were Guglielmo Patrina, Pietro Moscati, Giovanni Battista Palletta. Monteggia paid special attention to the study of anatomy, but he also attended classes in botany and pharmacology with Antonio Poratia [1].

He passed an exam of surgery in 1781, in Pavia (Lombardy). His first printed work in Latin was published in 1789 in Milan entitled *Fasciculi Pathologici* (pathology collection), and it was printed by Giuseppe Marelli. The work is based on clinical observation of certain diseases, which follow the autopsy and pathological findings. He classified the disease into symmetrical and asymmetrical, while the second part examines *lesiones capitis* (head diseases) with an accent on brain function study. The book gives a detailed description of different cases of abscess. The most interesting anatomical preparations he gave to the Cabinet of Anatomy at the University of Pavia.

Monteggia was promoted to assistant surgery in 1790, and then became the head prosector at the hospital Maggiore. He was appointed chief surgeon at the Royal prison by

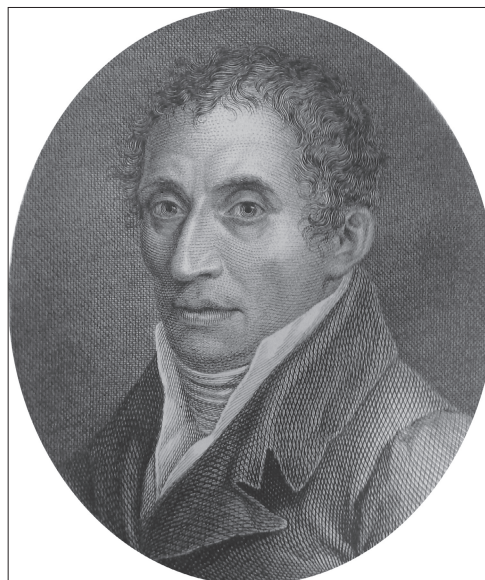


Figure 1. A portrait of Monteggia

http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giovanni_Battista_Monteggia

the Decree of the Court of Appeal in 1791. In 1792, the hospital Committee gave him the responsibility of holding free classes to students of surgery. That same year, Giuseppe Marelli's printing shop published his translation of venereal disease collection, published by Friedrich Fritz in Berlin in 1790. Next, his notes from the practice of venereal diseases were published in 1794 by Giuseppe Galeazzo. This book, which was dedicated to Moscati, presented a case study and the experience gained during the treatment of prisoners. The book recommends Shaporin plant in the treatment of venereal diseases.

Monteggia married Giovana Cremona from Novara in 1794. They had five children, and only three survived. During the next 15 years, his successful but short career culminates. He held various public offices working in the field

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Figure 2. A Monteggia fracture

of education (he founded the Special Medical School at various hospitals) or in military (from 1808 he questioned military surgeons). He was appointed professor of surgical ward at the hospital Maggiore in 1795. In 1799, he was employed as a surgeon and obstetrician at the hospital of St. Catherine. In the same year, he became an official medical officer in the French army and a permanent member of the health committee by the Decree of the War Council. In 1800 he was promoted the chief and began teaching at the Department of Surgery in the Hospital Maggiore.

In 1796 Monteggia published the translation from German *The Art of Obstetrics* by George Wilhelm Stein, then his collection of cases in obstetrics, and his masterpiece *Basics Surgery*. This work has been published several times in Milano, Napoli and Pavia. First edition in five volumes was published in Milano between 1802 and 1805, the second edition in eight volumes, revised by the author between 1813 and 1816 [2]. His main inspiration was the work of the Scottish surgeon John Hunter, but he also used other scientific literature and periodicals. It shows that he was a clinician focused more on practice than on systematization. In addition to surgical titles of suppuration, gangrene, tumors, injuries, fractures, his work was related to rheumatism, diseases of the eyes and skin. He was among the first who gave a complete clinical description of polio. However, his attention was mostly focused on orthopedics. He described traumatic hip dislocation and special forearm fracture which was named after him in 1814.

Strictly speaking, a Monteggia fracture is a fracture of the proximal third of the ulna with an anterior dislocation of the radial head [3] (Figure 2). Bado coined the term “Monteggia lesion” to include the entire spectrum of these injuries. He classified these injuries into four types, and gave percentages for each type [4].

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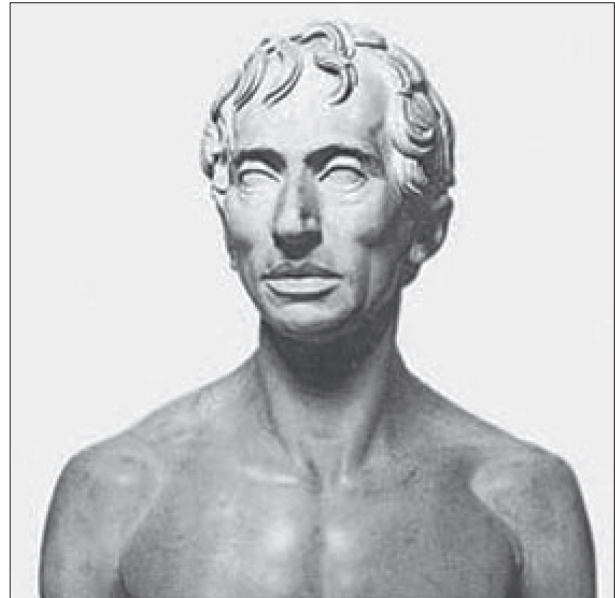


Figure 3. A bust of Monteggia

http://www.formazione.eu.com/_documents/cagranda/articoli/2000-04-07/articolo.pdf

Monteggia became a member of the renewed Institute of Science, Literature and Art in Milano in 1813. He was a member of several Academies in Italy, had a rich correspondence with colleagues from Italy and other countries, and possessed a good knowledge of foreign languages and periodicals. He was a collaborator in the *Journal of Latest Medical Literature of Europe* and *New Journal of Medicine and Surgery* from Milano, and formed a large library.

The ninth volume of his major work *Basics Surgery* has been never finished. There are notes showing that he envisioned chapters about immunization, electricity and pharmacology. He died in 17th January 1815 in Milano. It is known that, while performing an autopsy on a woman who died of syphilis, he had the misfortune to cut his finger and infected himself with the disease [5].

His monument was placed in the hall of the Hospital Maggiore, which is now lost, but thanks to the sculptor Camilla Pacetti his bust was saved (Figure 3). The poet Carlo Porta devoted a sonnet to him. Among his biographers the most well known is the doctor of medicine Enrico Acerbi from Milano.

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Ђовани Батиста Монтеђи (1762–1815)

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КРАТАК САДРЖАЈ

Ђовани Батиста Монтеђи је рођен 8. августа 1762. године у Лаверну, у Италији. Хирургију је почео да студира 1779. у болници Мађоре, у Милану. Болница се звала „Велика кућа“ и једна је од најстаријих медицинских установа у Италији. Испит из хирургије положио је 1781. У асистента на катедри хирургије промовисан је 1790. у болници Мађоре. Међу

првима је дао потпуни опис полија. Описао је трауматску дислокацију кука и посебан прелом горње трећине лакатне кости с предњом луксацијом главице жбице, који је по њему и назван. Монтеђи је 1813. године постао почасни члан Института науке, књижевности и уметности у Милану.

Кључне речи: Монтеђи; прелом подлактице; болница Мађоре

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