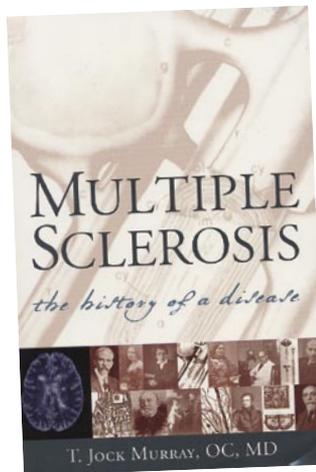


Multiple Sclerosis: The History of a Disease

T. JOCK MURRAY, OC, MD



Multiple sclerosis is not a new disease. Neither are efforts to explain and control it. Dr. T. Jock Murray's book is a thorough retelling of these efforts, covering stories that reach back many centuries. Dr. Murray, who is professor emeritus of Medicine and Neurology at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Canada, is well-known as a clinician with a special interest in the history of medicine—he is a recipient of the Neilson Award from the Hannah Institute for the History of Medicine for his contributions to medical history.

Dr. Murray's encyclopedic book begins with a discussion about how MS was initially distinguished from similar diseases. Following this, he presents reports of early patients who are thought to have had MS before it was recognized as a separate condition.

He includes sketches of 19th century physicians who described the disease clinically. Particular attention is given to Jean-Martin Charcot. Dr. Charcot's descriptions and others of his day demonstrate the value of careful clinical observation. The reader also gains considerable appreciation for what was known then, given the limi-

tations of technology at that time.

Dr. Murray organizes his overview of the last

100 years of MS research and treatment differently. He proceeds by topic, reviewing the attempts to explain the cause of the disease and the evolution of a wide variety of proposed treatments. The book includes much insight into the development of our current knowledge, including many blind alleys that investigators have followed. These false leads are presented sympathetically, with the understanding that some of today's valued perceptions may one day be discarded.

Dr. Murray's book reminds us that "stories" are at the heart of "histories," explaining in a lucid and compelling way what many brilliant observers have thought about this disease. A completely enjoyable read.

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