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PIONEERS IN NEUROLOGY

Gaetano Rummo (1853–1917)

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The lessons by Jean-Martin Charcot (1825–1893) at the Salpêtrière attracted students from all over Europe. Among them, the Italian physician Gaetano Rummo (Fig. 1) is worthy of remembrance, as he provided some important contributions to the development of neurology between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. Specifically, he translated and published Charcot's lessons on aphasia, including the famous representation of the diagram of the "bell", which illustrates Charcot's model of language (two sensory centres for listening and reading, two motor centres for speaking and writing, and a fifth centre for ideas) [1–3]. It is less known that the Italian edition published by Rummo was the only one that illustrated Charcot's diagram of the bell, a model subsequently discussed by authors such as Pierre Marie (1853–1940) [4]. Furthermore, Rummo was the first physician in Europe who introduced the use of phonograph in medical research to record the voices of his patients affected by aphasia [5]. In addition, he firmly believed in the experimental and diagnostic value of the cinematography in neuropsychiatry and commonly used it in his clinical practice [5].

Gaetano Rummo was born in Benevento, near Naples, on 6 July 1853. After taking his medical degree at the University of Naples in 1879, he became assistant of the clinicians Salvatore Tommasi (1813–1888) and Enrico De Renzi (1839–1921). In 1881, he did not succeed in a public competition to become appointed as medical assistant at the "Ospedale degli Incurabili", so he left Naples to move to Paris, where he attended Charcot's lessons at the Salpêtrière. Two years later, he published the only complete version of Charcot's courses about aphasia [1]. The preface of this essay was written by Charcot himself, who defined Rummo as "one of the most assiduous and competent of my auditors" [1].

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After his French period, he returned to Naples, where he founded the international medical journal "La Riforma Medica", which was an important source of updated information for physicians [6]. In 1887, for the first time, he tested atropine in vagal bradycardia and in the same year published a classification of the cardiac glycosides with his nephew, Andrea Ferrannini (1864–1939). In the following year, he published an essay on his researches about the influence of the sedative-hypnotic drugs on the cerebral circulation [7] and in 1890 a collection of pictures representing the different phases of "hystero-epilepsy" (corresponding to our psychogenic non-epileptic seizures), dedicating it to Charcot [8]. In the same period, he described the cardioptosis, a downward displacement of the heart, which was named after him as "Rummo's disease" [9] and the Genito-Dystrophic Geroderma (Senilism), also known as "Rummo-Ferrannini's disease". He was appointed as Full Professor of Internal Medicine at the University of Palermo (1895) and, finally, at the University of Naples (1906), transforming the structures he directed in advanced clinical institutes.

During his long career as a professor, he proved to be an innovator in teaching. He promoted the use of the phonograph to record the voices of patients in medical research, especially subjects with difficulties with speech and language [5]. From 1889, he applied photography in the investigation of hysteria and finally used the cinematography to better show clinical cases during his lessons, with the help of the Neapolitan operator Ruggeri [6]. In 1911, he also showed the movie "La Neuropatologia" by Camillo Negro (1861–1927) to his students.

Finally, Rummo was involved in politics, first as a municipal and provincial councilor in Benevento and afterwards as a member of the Italian Parliament in 1895–1897 and in 1904–1909. Specifically, he promoted social and educational reforms and supported the economic development of small industry and agriculture by founding a banking institution (*Banca Commerciale di Benevento*) in 1902. He passed away on 11 May 1917 in Naples and left all his scientific writings and essays to the Hospital of Benevento, which was, in his honor, renamed "Ospedale Gaetano Rummo" in 1935.

Fig. 1 Memorial bust of Gaetano Rummo (1853–1917). Courtesy by Azienda Ospedaliera "San Pio", Presidio Ospedaliero "Gaetano Rummo", Benevento, Italy

Compliance with ethical standards

Conflicts of interest The author declares that they have no conflict of interest.

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