

## Looking Back in History

# Josef Jadassohn – A pioneer in dermatology

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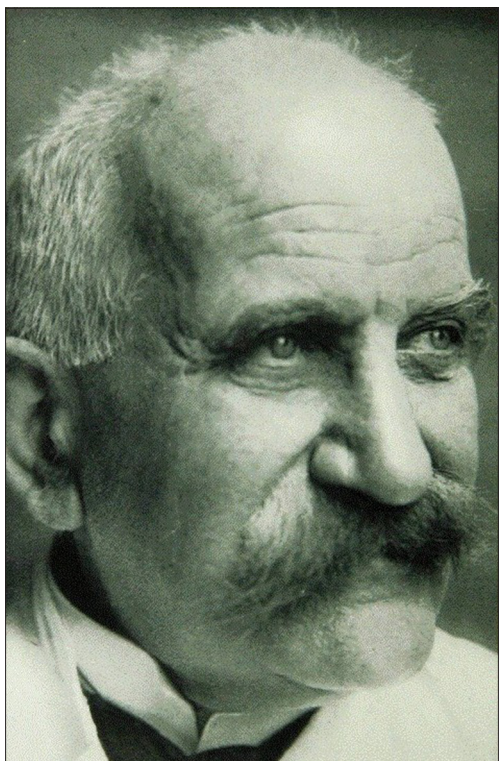
Josef Jadassohn (1863–1936) [Figure 1] had a great impact on the growth of dermatology. He is well known for having described various conditions, many of which bear his name, along with his assistants. Some of these conditions include nevus sebaceous of Jadassohn, Jadassohn-Lewandowsky syndrome (pachyonychia congenita), Jadassohn-Dössekker disease (myxoedema tuberosum), and Naegeli-Franceschetti-Jadassohn syndrome.<sup>[1]</sup> He was the first to describe pityriasis lichenoides chronica, granulosis rubra nasi, incontinentia pigmenti, as well as the Borst-Jadassohn phenomenon. He is known as the father of the patch test.<sup>[2]</sup> Other eponymous conditions include Jadassohn-Tieche nevus (blue nevi) and Jadassohn-Pellizzari anetoderma.<sup>[3]</sup>

Jadassohn was born into a Jewish family in Liegnitz, Silesia (now in Poland) on September 10, 1863.<sup>[1,2]</sup> He studied medicine in Göttingen, Heidelberg, Leipzig, and Breslau, obtaining his doctorate in 1888 at Breslau [Table 1]. He was offered a dermatology residency position at the University of Breslau by Albert Neisser. After residency, he joined the staff at the University of Breslau. In 1896, Jadassohn proposed a classification of skin diseases according to etiology.<sup>[4]</sup> He was particularly interested in tuberculosis and contributed an extensive chapter on cutaneous tuberculosis to the Handbook of Skin Diseases (*Handbuch der Hautkrankheiten*) edited by Franz Mracek of Vienna. In 1896, at age 33, he succeeded Edmund Lesser as director of the skin clinic of the University of Berne. In 1903, Jadassohn was promoted to the rank of professor, and in 1906, the skin clinic of Berne conducted the 9<sup>th</sup> Congress of the German Dermatological Society, which very much enhanced the prestige of the clinic. In 1917, after 21 years in Switzerland, Jadassohn moved to the University of Breslau where he succeeded his former teacher, Albert Neisser. This was the most prestigious chair of dermatology in the German Reich, and Jadassohn was given the title of “Geheimrat” (privy councilor), by which everyone called him.<sup>[4]</sup> This period is considered one of the turning points for Dermatology.<sup>[5]</sup> Jadassohn’s students included luminaries such as Bruno Bloch (1878–1933), Max Jessner (1887–1978), Marion Sulzberger (1895–1983), Stephen Epstein (1900–1973), Herman K.B. Pinkus (1905–1985) and Walter Freudenthal (1893–1952).<sup>[5]</sup> Together they did phenomenal work in describing various skin conditions and their many facets.

Jadassohn also occupied a series of editorial and administrative posts [Table 2]. He was an editorial board member of “Archiv für Dermatologie und Syphilis.” One of his valuable contributions to dermatology was the “Handbook of Skin and Venereal Diseases,”<sup>[3]</sup> published between 1927 and 1934 in 23 volumes and 41 different parts.<sup>[4]</sup> Jadassohn’s handbook was considered by far the most comprehensive textbook of dermatology ever published. Whenever he wrote or spoke, he endeavored to be as accurate and conservative as possible.<sup>[6]</sup> He was elected as an Honorary fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine in 1935.<sup>[7]</sup>

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**Figure 1:** Josef Jadassohn. Reproduced with permission from *Obituary*.

Year	Event
1863, September 10	Born in Liegnitz, Silesia
1888	Received his doctorate
1887	Assistant to Albert Neisser in the University of Breslau
1892	Finished residency and went on sponsored tour of Dermatology centers in Europe. Appointed chief of the dermatologic division of the Allerheiligen Hospital in Breslau.
1896	Chair of dermatology at the University of Bern, Switzerland at age 33
1917	Called to Breslau to succeed Neisser
1930–1931	Retired from the University of Breslau
1934	Migrated to Zurich
1936, March 24	Death at Zurich

Jadassohn married Margrete Kern in the year 1896, and they had a son (Werner Jadassohn) in 1897, who later became chairman of the Department of Dermatology at the University of Geneva. After 7 years, they had a daughter (Hilde). The activities of the Nazi party caused him and his family distress, and they migrated to Zurich in 1934. Jadassohn was diagnosed with colon cancer in 1936, to which he succumbed the same year on March 24.<sup>[3,5]</sup>

Year	Achievement
1892	Described “erythematous anetoderma of Jadassohn”
1894	Described pityriasis lichenoides chronica
1895	Described nevus sebaceous
1895	Described prototype of patch test
1896	Proposed a classification of skin diseases based on etiology
1900	Published a paper on drug reactions
1901	Described granulosis rubra nasi
1904	Published paper on “infectious and toxic hematogenic dermatoses”
1905	Published paper on “skin diseases caused by disorders of metabolism” and “toxicodermas”
1907	Published chapter on “tuberculosis” in handbook of skin diseases ( <i>Handbuch der Hautkrankheiten</i> )
1906	Described incontinentia pigmenti, cutis verticis gyrate, blue nevi, and pachonychia congenita, with students at the 9 <sup>th</sup> congress of German Dermatology Society
1913	Cofounder and the first vice president of the Swiss society of dermatology and venereology
1917	Assumed the editorship of the <i>Archiv für Dermatologie und Syphilis</i>
1921	Founded the <i>Zentralblatt für Haut-und Geschlechtskrankheiten</i> Served as departmental editor of <i>Dermatologische Wochenschrift</i> and <i>Klinische Wochenschrift</i> .
1922	Chairman of the German society for the fight against venereal diseases
1928	Became chairman of the syphilis commission of the league of nations
1927–34	Editor-in-chief of handbook of skin and venereal diseases ( <i>Handbuch der Haut-und Geschlechtskrankheiten</i> ).

Jadassohn, after the end of the war and the fall of the Nazis, was honored again as a pioneering dermatologist and as “the king of dermatology” in Germany and the world in the 1920s.

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