



Editorial

Dermatology in Dresden, Germany – A historical perspective

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Dermatology as any other science does not develop in a vacuum. The history, the presence, and the future are deeply influenced by political, social, cultural, and technological factors. “*The story of the evolution of a medical specialty is worthy of attention and of being told, if only to review the reasons for the growth and progress of the discipline*” (L. C. Parish 2019).

In Germany, venereology is part of dermatology. The earliest historical notes related to dermatology are from the Middle Ages, when venereology, plague, and leprology were major treads to society. During the Renaissance, academic medicine developed further. Samuel Haffenreffer (1587–1660) wrote the first German textbook on dermatology in 1630, entitled “The Inn of the Gay Fleece.” The first German university was founded in 1386 – Ruperto Caroloa in Heidelberg. The first independent clinical dermatological department at a German university was established in 1858 in Berlin and taken over by Friedrich Wilhelm Felix von Bärensprung (1822–1864).

Dresden is the capital of Saxony in the south-eastern part of Germany. The first dermatological outpatient clinic started in Dresden in 1869. The Hospital Dresden-Friedrichstadt was founded in 1845 and opened in 1849. The character of the hospital was deeply influenced by its history as a noble palace with historic artifacts and a beautiful park. One of the most spectacular pretitiosis is the Neptune Fountain, one of the major European fountains of the 17th and 18th century alongside the Trevi Fountain of Palazzo Poli in Rome and the Neptune Fountain of castle Schönbrunn near Vienna. The press characterized the new hospital as “magnificent” and “very suitable,” dignified for the royal capital.

In 1866, a Department for Syphilitic Women was opened as part of the 2nd External Department. In 1874, this department was transformed into the Department of Dermatology, Venereology, and Minor Surgery. It consisted of 71 inpatient beds, nursing staff, and physicians. It was the second Municipal Department of Dermatology in the German-speaking countries after Nuremberg, which opened in 1845. The Hospital Dresden-Friedrichstadt was highly regarded not only in Saxony.

The first leading physician for dermatology was Julius Otto Martini (1829–1909). Under his leadership, the department expanded to 140 beds. His major interest was venereology. In 1901 he was followed by Johannes Werther (1865–1936). He established new laboratories, histology, surgery, and photography. In 1907, an X-ray machine and a quartz lamp completed the equipment. Werther’s areas of work included venereal diseases, lupus vulgaris, bullous dermatoses, and psychodermatology. In 1903, he founded the collection of moulages (waxen images) which was further extended to almost 400 artifacts until the 1930ies.

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Table 1: Milestones of dermatology in Dresden.

Year	Milestone
1866	Venereal clinic for women
1869	First dermatology outpatient clinic
1874	Foundation of the Department of Dermatology, Venereology, and Minor Surgery, one of the oldest departments of dermatology independent from a medical university – a great starting point for dermato-surgery
1903	Foundation of Werther's collection of moulages – one of the most modern tools for teaching dermatology and educating the population at this time
1903–1906	Exhibition “Widespread Diseases and their Suppression” on venereal diseases
1911	International Hygiene Exhibition Dresden with one focus on venereal diseases
1916	Introduction of cignolin (anthralin or dithranol) into the topical treatment of psoriasis by Eugen Galewsky
1925	14 th Congress of the German Dermatological Society (Werther and Galewsky), the first congress at a place without a medical university
1935	First International guidelines for syphilis diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up under the Auspices of the League of Nations (by Werther)

Eugen Galewsky (1864–1935) worked in a well-frequented private practice in Dresden. Parallel to Johannes Werther, Galewsky was involved in the production of moulages to illustrate the effects of venereal diseases. He convinced Karl August Lingner to design the exhibition “Widespread Diseases and their Suppression” in 1903, which was also shown in Frankfurt am Main, Munich and Kiel from 1904 to 1906. At

Galewsky's suggestion, Lingner founded the Pathoplastic Institute in 1910 whose medical-scientific advisor was Galewsky – from 1926 together with his partner Karl Linser. The institute was later affiliated with the Hygiene Museum. A separate pavilion at the International Hygiene Exhibition Dresden in 1911 was dedicated to venereal diseases, for which Galewsky was conceptually responsible. He is well known for his pioneering work on topical treatment for psoriasis. Until World War I chrysarobin from Goa powder was a major component of topical treatment of psoriasis and ringworm. He introduced the synthetic compound cignolin (anthralin) in 1916, as a substitute for chrysarobin. Even today it is the topical drug with the highest response rate and the longest relapse-free time after cessation of treatment. In 1925, Werther and Galewsky were given the honor of hosting the 14th Congress of the German Dermatological Society, for the first time not at a university department. In 1930, Hans Martenstein (1892–1945) took over the succession. His review article “Syphilis Treatment: Part I. Enquiry in Five Countries Carried out under the Auspices of the Health Organization of the League of Nations” of 1935 may be considered as the first international guideline for diagnostics, treatment, and follow-up for patients affected by syphilis. The foundation of an independent Department of Dermatology and Venereology in 1937 at the Hospital Dresden-Friedrichstadt is a merit of Martenstein. The clinic had 225 inpatient beds and was one of the most modern departments of dermatology in Germany. The history of dermatology in Dresden, Germany illustrates that substantial contributions to our specialty can be made by doctors in private practice and city hospitals [Table 1].

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