Historical sketches of the beginnings of the academic “Mental and Nervous Diseases” in Brazil, and European influences

Esboços históricos do começo acadêmico das “Doenças mentais e nervosas” no Brasil e influências européias

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ABSTRACT
We present the common milestones of the neurology and psychiatry in Brazil, but, previously, they were summarized in the European matrix. The main psychiatric and neurological historical interceptions may be recognized by the terms neurology, psychiatry, alienism, neurosis and insanity; its organogenesis or socio- and psychogenetic basis; and its proximity or distance from internal medicine.

Key words: neurology, psychiatry, neuropsychiatry, history, neurosciences.

RESUMO
Apresentam-se as etapas comuns da neurologia e da psiquiatria no Brasil, porém, essas etapas foram previamente resumidas na matriz europeia. As principais interceptações históricas psiquiátricas e neurológicas podem ser reconhecidas pelos termos neurologia, psiquiatria, alienismo, neurose e insanidade, sua organogênese ou base social e psicogenética e a sua proximidade ou distância da medicina interna.

Palavras-Chave: neurologia, psiquiatria, neuropsiquiatria, história, neurociências.

The organic basis of psychiatry, or on the opposite direction, the socio- and psychogenetic basis, gives the historical forward or backward tropism to neurology. In this article, we comment on this journey in Brazil, but first we make a summary of the main confluent or differential historical hallmarks of neurology and psychiatry that led their way in Europe.

THE NEUROLOGICAL AND PSYCHIATRIC BOUNDARY

The construction of the modern neurology and psychiatry stems from the seventeenth century. The critical points of the parallel history of neurology and psychiatry are shown in Fig 1. In short, the field and development of both specialties came from internal medicine. Much of this initial development was studied by Bogousslavsky and Moulin¹ in a paper that presents the historical backbone of the French neurology and psychiatry.

The emergence of neurology as an autonomous and prestigious field occurred in the late nineteenth century in Paris lead by Jean-Martin Charcot (1825–1893). A chair of Clinical Diseases of the Nervous System (1882) was established at the School of Medicine in Paris and occupied by Charcot. Previously (1875), a chair for Clinic of Mental Illness and Diseases of the Brain was devised, in the same School of Medicine, under Charcot’s influence¹. However, the unity of Charcot’s School took place around the study of hysteria, as hysterical women with somatic manifestations were commonly admitted to La Salpêtrière. Indeed, the alienists had always claimed their disinterest for this condition at the time. The alienists were trying to explain all cases of insanities as a result of brain lesions, but they mainly focused on patient management. However,
considering research and scientific teaching, the accomplishment was poor. Conversely, the influential School lead by Wilhelm Griesinger (1817–1868) carried out research based on anatomoclinical method. Moreover, another group guided by Benedict-Augustin Morel (1809–1873) combined anatomoclinical (not obvious anatomical lesion) and philosophical methods to propose a degenerative theory for mental disorders.

The proximity of neurologists and modern psychiatrists led to the emergence of “neuropsychiatrists” from the nineteenth century until at least two-thirds of the twentieth century. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) promoted the theory of psychoanalysis and helped to define the modern concept of neurosis. By this time, most psychiatrists already believed that the insanities were of organic etiology, while the neuroses were of psychological origin — exactly the opposite of what was believed at the beginning of the nineteenth century. However, some psychiatrists and neurologists still believed that the neuroses were caused by organic changes. Regarding

the psychiatric field, Freud and Emil Kraepelin (1856–1926) became the two most influential personalities in the early twentieth century, and neuropsychiatry was an emerging discipline attracting the interest of many students of brain pathology, particularly in the German-speaking world. After World War II, the division between neurology and psychiatry became explicit.

THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN NEUROLOGY AND PSYCHIATRY IN BRAZIL

Tracing back, the history of Brazilian neurology and psychiatry goes to 1831. The milestones of this path are given in Box, unfolded in articles published by at least one of the author of the present paper. Early in the twentieth century, neurological and psychiatric institutions were formed around Hospices, and in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, around the National Hospice for the Insane. This stream gave a heritage to the most influential Forerunner School of Psychiatry and...
Neurology in Brazil. The map of the area (Fig 2), presently the Campus of Praia Vermelha of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), demonstrates how close they were. The Brazilian neurology emerged mainly from internal medicine during the second half of the nineteenth century. However, on academic grounds as a chair, it was linked to psychiatry. Antonio Austregesilo Rodrigues de Lima, the first to hold a chair of neurology in Brazil, was strongly attached to the Brazilian psychiatric school6, in opposition to Charcot who had absolutely no connection with mental alienation (“psychiatry”) tradition and school7. Despite their different profile, the “neurological-looking” clinical manifestations of the hysterical patients impressed Charcot1 and, in the same way, Austregesilo.

**CONCLUSION**

In Brazil, the cathedra of neurology came from academic psychiatry rather than internal medicine, in spite of the great influence of this last one on clinical practice and academic forum. However, the hospice central importance...
The main structures of the old Hospice (National Hospice for the Insane), and its secondary buildings are visualized. New building areas, as those related to the Institutes of Neurology, Psychiatry and Psychology of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro-UFRJ, as well as Philippe Pinel Institute, are limited by dotted lines. Black dotted line: 1. University Palace [National Hospice for the Insane]. 2. University Foundation José Bonifácio (FUJB) [Infirmary & Pavilion of the Unclean]. Lilac dotted line: 5. Institute of Psychology [Laundry]. Red dotted line: 6. Institute of Psychiatry – Medical residence [Magnani’s observation pavilion]; 7. Institute of Psychiatry – Children and Youth Care & Rehab Center [H. Roxo’s observation pavilion]; 8. Institute of Psychiatry – Children and Youth Psychosocial Care Center [Meynert’s observation pavilion]; 12. Institute of Psychiatry – Infirmary & Administration [Rodrigues Caldas’ pavilion]; 54. Institute of Psychiatry – [Torres Homem pavilion]. Blue dotted line: 46. Institute of Neurology [Morgue]; 53. Institute of Neurology [Neurological Clinic]. Green dotted line: 48. Philippe Pinel Institute [Peixoto pavilion]; 51. Philippe Pinel Institute [Ambulatory]; 52. Philippe Pinel Institute [Neuro-Syphilis]. They were also highlighted the following demolished buildings: 43-Bourneville pavilion (neuropsychiatric, children); 45-Griesinger Pavilion, Women epileptic pavilion; 65-Men epileptic pavilion (outside the UFRJ border).

Neurosciences main areas — dotted lines (presently [formerly]). (Source: Technical Office of the University – UFRJ).

Fig. 2. The main structures of the old Hospice (National Hospice for the Insane), and its secondary buildings are visualized.

for mental health care and also for neurology faded in Brazil and worldwide. One major reason was the development of psychotropic drugs (neuroleptics and antidepressants), and penicillin, for the treatment of neurosyphilis, which favored a move of the major psychotics to outpatient care. Despite this dispersion, the area surrounding the ancient National Hospice for the Insane became an important center of the activities of Brazilian neurology and psychiatry.

References