



ELSEVIER

Caretaker of the Skin

Daniel Turner (1667-1740)

Andrzej Grzybowski, MD, PhD, MBA^{a,b,*}, Piotr Kanclerz, MD, PhD^c,
Lawrence Charles Parish, MD, MD(Hon)^d^aDepartment of Ophthalmology, University of Warmia and Mazury, Olsztyn, Poland^bInstitute for Research in Ophthalmology, Foundation for Ophthalmology Development, Poznan, Poland^cDepartment of Ophthalmology, Hygeia Clinic, Gdańsk, Poland^dDepartment of Dermatology and Cutaneous Biology, Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University, and Jefferson Center for International Dermatology, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Abstract Daniel Turner (1667-1740) is credited with having written the first book in English on the diagnosis and treatment of skin disease. In *De Morbis Cutaneis*, Turner distinguishes two types of skin conditions: those that affect the inside of the body but are symptomatic on the surface, and those that are of an outward origin. Turner also underlines the necessity for prophylaxis against venereal diseases. Turner's book *Syphilis. A Practical Dissertation on the Venereal Disease* contains the first description of the "condum," a word that derives from the Latin *condio*, *condo* and means "to preserve." Turner should be remembered as a champion of his era for advocating that each patient should be viewed as an individual and for heralding the importance of observing the skin as part of a routine physical examination. Turner may be considered to be the father of British dermatology.

© 2019 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Introduction

Daniel Turner (1667-1740) was likely born in London in 1667, the year after the Great Fire (Figure 1). His parents were John and Rebecca Turner, and there are records that he had two older brothers and at least two sisters. Turner was apprenticed at 17 years of age to Charles Bateman and later to Thomas Lichfield, a sometime master of the Barber-Surgeons' Company, to which Turner was also elected on February 2, 1691.¹

As was the custom of the era, Turner conducted a private London practice in the fashionable quarter of Leicester Square. Patients sometimes appeared at his residence unexpectedly and even as late as 2 AM.² He proved to be a successful and respected practitioner, even without having received the coveted fellowship of the Royal College of Physicians (RCP).

Turner used writing as a means to enhance his reputation and published a number of books on a variety of medical subjects.³ He practiced as a surgeon and was a licentiate of the Worshipful Company of Barbers and Surgeons for nearly twenty years, but he had higher aspirations and, in 1711, resigned from the Worshipful Company of Barbers and Surgeons, paying a fine of £50 and requesting to be stricken from the register.⁴⁻⁶ The Royal College of Surgeons (RCS) would not separate from the Barbers until 1745 and so did not command the respect that the RCP enjoyed. A few months later, Turner was accepted as a licentiate of the RCP.⁷

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +48 2 4776803.

E-mail address: ae.grzybowski@gmail.com (A. Grzybowski). Edited by Andrzej Grzybowski, MD, PhD, MBA this belongs under Caretaker of the Skin. this is revolting that copy editors don't edit; instead, the both up style.



Fig. 1 Daniel Turner (1667-1740).

Fighting against quackery

Turner's first known publication appeared in 1695. *Apologia Chyrgica* (Figure 2) focused on contemporary surgery and particularly on the problem of quackery. Turner noted, "These Quack Practitioners were never so numerous as they are at present, there being scarce a corner in either City or Suburbs, where one or other of these Intruders have not shamefully crept in."⁸ He suggested that such charlatans should be distinguished from true members of the medical profession, ostensibly because acceptance of these "quacks", a popular term of the day, could harm both the patient and the doctor.⁹ He wrote, "what good and wholesome Laws were made to punish all such arrogant Persons ... who have procur'd as much Mischief to the People as Contempt to Surgery, and its honourable Professors."⁸

The unscrupulous quacks promoted cure-alls that often seemed outlandish, even for the era, including the Vatican Pill for curing "scurvy to ague" and the Elixir Vitae as a remedy for syphilis.¹⁰ Unfortunately, Turner was sometimes labeled as a quack, too, possibly because the establishment disagreed with several of his ideas, which were not necessarily

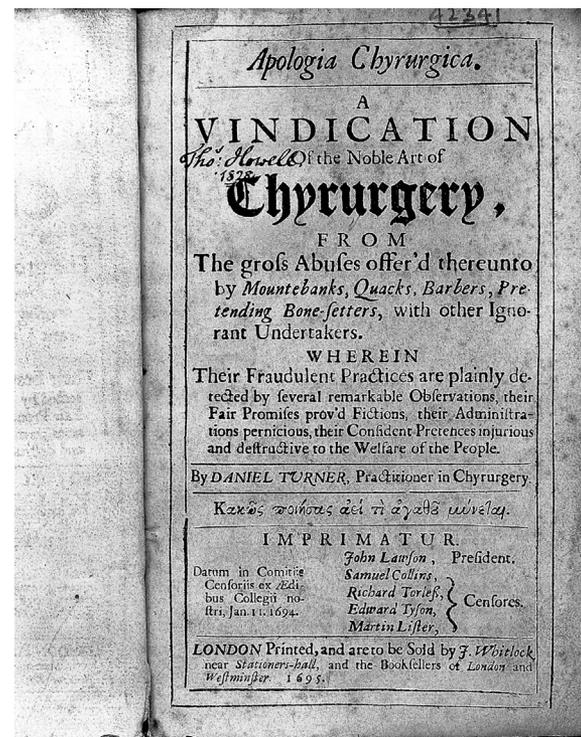


Fig. 2 The front page of Turner's *Apologia Chyrgica*.

unorthodox for the era.¹¹ Illustrative of this was his belief that a pregnant woman's imagination could imprint her newborn with various marks and deformities.¹²⁻¹⁴ The concept was based on a long-standing belief presented by the imagonists, but it had no acceptance as far back as in the writings of Hippocrates.¹⁵ This opinion became a weapon in the hands of Turner's critics who taunted him for the absurdity of it.¹⁶ It even led to a famous dispute in 1727 with James Blondel, whose opposing view was based on more rational and anatomic grounds.^{14,17}

Turner called upon the medical world to establish a more rigorous system of examination for medical practitioners than was currently available, especially in London.¹⁸ The activities of Joshua "Spot" Ward (1685-1761),¹⁹ a drysalter (a London dealer of chemical products) and member of the House of Commons, also earned Turner's wrath. Ward had an interest in chemistry and medicine, probably to promote his "Drop and Pill," which promised to cure every human ill. Not only was this antimony ineffective, but it also created terrible gastrointestinal problems.²⁰ Ward also produced the "White Drop," "Sweating Powder," "Paste," "Dropsy purging powder," and "Essence for headache."¹⁰ Two of these were effective and useful preparations; the "Paste" and the "Headache essence" later became incorporated in the London pharmacopeia.

The excessive use of mercurials by quacks and orthodox practitioners alike for what might be syphilis, gonorrhea, or other venereal diseases was a considerable problem.¹⁸ Turner observed: "A Case somewhat related to this, in a Paralytick,

farther advanced in Years, has been, with great Industry, conceal'd; where a violent Vomiting began the Tragedy, and after seventy, or nearer eighty Stools, most of them Blood, the Patient died upon the Bed-pan."¹⁹

Achieving recognition

Turner had higher aspirations than those of an 18th century surgeon. He was only a licentiate but obviously wanted the imprimatur of fellowship and sought a new route, which required an MD degree. To earn an MD, many fellows of the RCP attended the universities of Oxford or Cambridge. Another track for obtaining the coveted degree was through the Scottish universities, which often awarded honorary degrees, not infrequently through monetary exchanges, but Turner found a new way to achieve the important recognition. The Collegiate School, established in 1701 in the Connecticut Colony, had higher goals for itself, now that it had forsaken Saybrook for the more important town of New Haven. In 1718, Elihu Yale (1649-1721), a Welsh merchant, donated 417 books, a not uncommon gift to the colonies for the period. The School showed its appreciation by changing its name to Yale College.

Turner learned that if he donated books to the school, he might also receive recognition or even a degree in return. Turner arranged for a shipment of 48 volumes, comprised in part of some of his books, in 1722.^{2,21} One year later, Turner's gift bought him his first MD degree, albeit honorary, awarded in the colonies.²² Yale would not have a medical department until 1810,²³ but several of the books donated by Turner continue to reside in the rare book room of the historical library at Yale Medical School.²²

De Morbis Cutaneis

In 1714, Turner published his well-known monograph *De Morbis Cutaneis* (Figure 3).¹⁴ The dissertation, despite its Latin title, is one of the first treatises in English devoted to dermatologic diseases. Other notable works of those days were the French *Tractatus de Morbis Cutaneis*²⁴ and the Latin *Doctrina de Morbis Cutaneis*.²⁵ Turner was able to bridge the medical traditions of the Middle Ages, which had been adapted from Ancient Greece, to 18th century London medicine.²⁶ In his text, as in his other books, Turner commonly referred to the opinions of Hippocrates, Heliodorus, and Galen.^{14,27,28} *De Morbis Cutaneis* begins with a description of the anatomy of the skin. Subsequently, skin alterations, such as alphas, exanthema, lichen, psora, leuce, furfur, porrigo, rhagades, scabies, and vitiligo, are characterized. Turner also presents several other diseases including *Lues venerea*, gangrene, herpes, smallpox, yellow jaundice, *Lepra arabus*, and *Lepra graecorum*.

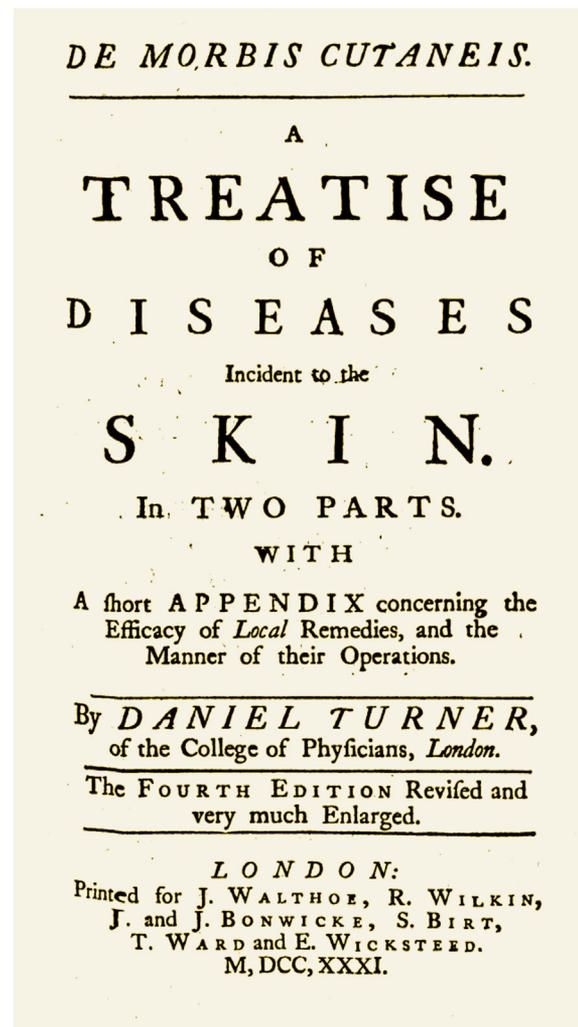


Fig. 3 The front page of *De Morbis Cutaneis*.

Illustrative of his straightforward writing is his description of herpetic lesions.

The Herpes ... is a choleric Pustule breaking forth of the Skin diversely, and accordingly receiving a diverse Denomination. If they appear single, as they do often in the face, the rise with a sharp Top and inflamed Base; and having discharg'd a Drop of Matter they contain, the Redness and Pain go off, and they dry away of themselves.

The entries are usually accompanied by appealing case reports and a list of topical and general medications. He advises "iron mineral water" for the leprosy of the Greeks and bleeding or "sulphur and it Preparations" for remedying "the itch." For "falling hair," the recommendations include "The Fat of the Snake." In addition, he writes, "You are first to shave off the downy Appearance, after by gentle rubbing with a Cloth to open the Pores and draw Nourishment to the Place..." One preparation that has survived is Turner's cerate (Figure 4), a drying ointment containing calamine.

De Morbis Cutaneis appeared in five editions during Turner's lifetime. The book was even translated into French and

I know the Medicine has been imitated by several, and I have seen somewhat like it in some Gentlemens Salvatories, but I know not more than two Persons I ever communicated it to, as I was wont to prepare it for my own Use, and having laid down that Practice, now publickly impart it to be prepar'd as follows.

℞ Butyr. recent. Mense Maij. collect. & sine Sale præp. Cera citr. optimè defæcat. ana ℥iijß. Olei Olivæ. rec. & purif. ℥iv. Lapid Calamin. Selet. subtilissimè triti & cribati ℥ij. ℥x.
Liquefiant Cera & Butyrum in Vasculo proprio, super Ignem lentum unâ cum Oleo, & liquefacta colentur per pannum Cannabinum in Vas lterum, statimque insperge Pulverem gradatim, continuò agitando Mixturam è fundo Vasis, donec frigescere incipiat, & pulvis præ pondere suo, non amplius subsidere possit.

Fig. 4 The original prescription of Turner's cerate.

German.^{3,29–31} He was a prolific writer with good observational skills, which he also put to use in *The Art of Surgery*, which included sections like “Tumours, Wounds, Ulcers, Dislocations, and Fractures.”^{32,33}

Syphilis and the condom

In 1717, Turner published *Syphilis. A Practical Dissertation on the Venereal Disease*.³⁴ In it, he observes that the scourge was called the French pox in England, as it was believed to have arrived from the New World through France. Later, it was renamed the great pox, as it spread extensively across the European continent.^{35,36}

The Remedy is found, yet such the Fate, Poor Sinner! That it often comes too late: For what, alas! Avails the Art, if still [shall kill]. Those whom the Pox would spare, the wretched Quack But waiving the several Ways of Contracting this Disease (called by way of Eminency the Great Pox, I suppose from some Resemblance in its cutaneous Breakings out to the Small Ones).

Turner underlines the necessity for prophylaxis against this infectious disease.³⁷ The book contains the first description of the “condum,”³⁴ a word which is derived from the Latin *condio, condo*, meaning “to preserve”:

I think there is no great Danger of such an Invention. The Condom being the best, if not the only Preservative our Libertines have found out at present; and yet, by reason of its blunting the Sensation, I have heard some of them acknowledge, that they had often chose to risque a Clap, rather than engage cum Hastis sic clypeatis [with spears thus shielded].

Turner was the author of this spelling, which might be more correct than the contemporary “condom.”³⁸

Turner's legacy

We can only presume what Turner's intent was for his extensive writings. Was he hoping to reform surgical practice by establishing a more rigorous examination system to reward medical professionals and disallow incompetent practitioners? Most of Turner's 34 treatises and books concern his surgical practice or propose reform for the art of surgery.⁷ Turner's creation and promotion of the condom would be sufficient for his inclusion in historic treatises.

It is difficult to say if Turner was truly accepted by the medical establishment. He was a prolific writer, and the five editions of his dermatology text are remarkable, giving him recognition and a lasting legacy. Not until 1792 did another book appear in English that discussed skin disease. This was Michael Underwood's (1736–1820) *A Treatise on the Diseases of Children, with General Directions for the Management of Infants from Birth*.

Turner was ahead of his colleagues in promoting the concept that each patient should be viewed as a person and not as a routine surgical procedure. He also heralded the importance of observing the skin as a part of a routine physical examination.³⁹ Although Robert Willan (1757–1812) is recognized on the cover of the *British Journal of Dermatology*, Daniel Turner precedes him as being one of the four proto-dermatologists of the eighteenth century, alongside Josef Plenck (1738–1807), Jean Astruc (1684–1766), and Anne-Charles Lorry (1726–1783).¹⁶

References

1. Wilson PK. Surgery, skin and syphilis. Daniel Turner's London (1667–1741). *Clio Med.* 1999;54:vii - xv, 1-312.
2. Loewenthal LJA. Daniel Turner and “de morbis cutaneis.”. *AMA Arch Derm Syphilol* 1962;85:517-523.
3. Cock E. “He would by no means risque his reputation”: patient and doctor shame in Daniel Turner's (1714) and (1717). *Med Humanit* 2017;43:231-237.
4. Lee S, ed. Turner, Daniel (1710-1798). In: *Dictionary of National Biography. Vol. LVII: Tom-Tytler*. London. Elder, & Co.: Smith; 1899. p. 333-335.
5. Lyell A. Daniel Turner, and the first controlled therapeutic trial in dermatology. *Clin Exp Dermatol* 1986;11:191-194.
6. Oriel DJ. Gonorrhoea virulenta. In: Oriel DJ, ed. *The Scars of Venus: A History of Venerology*. London: Springer Verlag Limited; 1994. p. 115-129.
7. Wilson PK. Daniel Turner and the art of surgery in early eighteenth-century London. *J R Soc Med* 1994;87:781-785.
8. Turner D. *Apologia Chyrurgica. A Vindication of the Noble Art of Chyrurgery, from the Gross Abuses Offer'd Thereunto by Mountebanks. Quacks... with Other Ignorant Undertakers*. London: J. Whitlock. 1695: 38-53.
9. Turner D. *The Modern Quacks Detected. Three Parts... Dedicated to the President of the Royal College of Physicians, in London*. London: M. Cooper; 1752. p. 1-62.
10. Thompson CJS. *Quacks of Old London*. London: Brentano's Limited. 1928.

11. Historical archive symposium: summaries of papers. *Br J Dermatol* 2008;159:70-77.
12. Turner D. *A Defence of the XIIth Chapter of the First Part of a Treatise, De Morbis Cutaneis affixed to Turner's Discourse Concerning Gleets*. London: J. Clarke. 1729.
13. Turner D. *The Force of the Mother's Imagination upon Her Foetus in Utero, Still Farther Considered: In the Way of a Reply to Dr. Blondel's Last Book, Entitled, The Power of the Mother's Imagination over the Foetus Examined: To Which Is Added, the Twelfth Chapter of the First Part of a Treatise De Morbis Cutaneis, as It Was Printed Therein Many Years Past: In a Letter to Dr. Blondel*. London: J. Walthoe, R. Wilkin, J. and J. Bonwicke, S. Birt, J. Clarke, T. Ward and E. Wicksteed; 1730.
14. Turner D. *De Morbis Cutaneis: A Treatise of Diseases Incident to the Skin*. London: J. Walthoe, R. Wilkin, J. and J. Bonwicke; 1726:74-82.
15. Blondel JA. *The Power of the Mother's Imagination Over the Foetus Examined: An Answer to Daniel Turner's Book, Intituled a Defence of the XIIth Chapter of the First Part of the Treatise, De Morbus Cutaneis*. London: John Brotherton. 1729.
16. Crissey JT, Parish LC. *The Dermatology and Syphilology of the Nineteenth Century*. New York: Praeger Publishers. 1981:8-15.
17. Wilson PK. "Out of sight, out of mind?": the Daniel Turner-James Blondel dispute over the power of the maternal imagination. *Ann Sci* 1992;49:63-85.
18. Jenner M, Turner Daniel. In: Bynum WF, Bynum H, eds. *Dictionary of Medical Biography: S-Z*. London: Greenwood Press; 2007. p. 1247-1248.
19. Turner D. The Drop and Pill of Mr. Ward: Consider'd London: John Clarke 1735:1-28.
20. Magee R. Writings of Daniel Turner and his views on the practice of surgery. *ANZ J Surg* 2003;73:438-442.
21. Talbott JH. Daniel Turner (1667-1740), dermatologist, surgeon, physician. *JAMA* 1970;213:863.
22. Lane JE. Daniel Turner and the first degree of doctor of medicine conferred in the English colonies of North America by Yale College in 1723. *Ann Med Hist* 1919;2:367-380.
23. Hare PJ. Daniel Turner (1667-1741). *Br J Dermatol* 1967;79:657.
24. Lorry A-C. *Tractatus de Morbis Cutaneis*. Paris: Guillelmum Cavelier. 1777.
25. von Plenck JJR. *Doctrina de Morbis Cutaneis*. Vienna: Rudolphum Graeffer; 1776.
26. Lyell A. Daniel Turner (1667-1740) LRCP London (1711) M.D. honorary, Yale (1723) surgeon, physician and pioneer dermatologist: the man seen in the pages of his book on the skin. *Int J Dermatol* 1982;21:162-170.
27. Turner D. The Ancient Physician's Legacy Impartially Survey'd: And His Practice Prov'd Repugnant, Not Only to that of the Best Antient and Modern Physicians, but to the Very Nature of Those Diseases (many of Them) of Which He Undertakes to Give Us an Account; Inconsistent Even with Those Very Indications Himself at Some Times Lays down for the Cure. With Practical Observations upon Each Chapter. In a Letter to a Country Physician. To Which Is Added, in the Way of Postscript, A Discourse on Quicksilver, as Now Commonly Taken: And the Good or Bad Effects Which Have Thence Ensued. As Also, a Particular Account of Monsieur Bellost's Pill Compar'd with the Author's. And the Case of Barton Booth, Esq; the Late Famous Tragedian. As the Same Was Communicated to the Author by Mr. Alexander Small, Surgeon, Who Open'd the Body in the Presence of Sir Hans Sloan. London: John Clarke; 1733.
28. Turner D. A Discourse Concerning Fevers: In 2 Letters to a Young Physician. London: John Clarke 1732;290.
29. Potter BS. Bibliographic landmarks in the history of dermatology. *J Am Acad Dermatol* 2003;48:919-932.
30. Turner D. *von den Krankheiten der Haut*. Altenburg: A. D. Engl; 1766.
31. Goodman H. *Notable Contributors to the Knowledge of Dermatology*. New York: Medical Lay Press. 1953:88-90.
32. Turner D. *The Art of Surgery: In Which Is Laid Down Such a General Idea of the Same, as Is Founded Upon Reason, Confirm'd by Practice, and Farther Illustrated with Many Singular and Rare Cases Medico-Chirurgical*. London: C. Rivington, J. J. Clarke; Lacy. 1722:1-509.
33. Mann RJ. Historical vignette. Daniel Turner, the first British dermatologist. *Mayo Clin Proc* 1976;51:62-66.
34. Turner D, Palmer S. *Syphilis. A Practical Dissertation on the Venereal Disease*. London: R. Bonwicke; 1717:I-III, 74.
35. von Hutten U, Paynell T, Turner D. *De Morbo Gallico. A Treatise of the French Disease Publish'd above 200 Years Past*. London: John Clarke at the Bible under the Royal Exchange; 1730.
36. Smith L. The French pox. *J Fam Plann Reprod Health Care* 2006;32:265-266.
37. Lane JE. A note on the prophylaxis of syphilis from the writings of Daniel Turner, M.D. (Honorary), Yale, 1723. *Arch Dermatol Syphilol* 1923;7:800-804.
38. Waugh M. Daniel Turner (1667-1741): syphilis and the condom. *Int J STD AIDS* 2010;21:546-548.
39. Wilson PK. Choosing a dermatological hero for the millennium. Daniel Turner (1667-1741). *Clin Exp Dermatol* 2000;25:88-89.