



HISTORY OF DERMATOLOGY

SYPHILISATION IN EUROPE, 1850-C.1870

Daniel Wallach ⁽¹⁾

French Society for the History of Dermatology, 42 Rue de la Py, Paris, France ⁽¹⁾

In 1850, a French physician, Joseph-Alexandre Auzias-Turenne (1812-1870), claimed he had discovered that the repeated inoculation of chancres induced protection against syphilis. This so-called “syphilisation” was supposed to prevent syphilis in healthy people and also to cure the disease in syphilitic patients. In fact, syphilisation could never be demonstrated and was a total failure, with severe consequences for the inoculated individuals. Auzias-Turenne syphilised patients, colleagues, and himself, but never obtained approval in France, due to the opposition of academic authorities, led by Ricord. He nevertheless had followers in Europe, including Casimiro Sperino in Italy and William Boeck in Norway. Boeck adopted syphilisation as a routine treatment of acquired syphilis and tried to convince international colleagues. The history of syphilisation teaches nothing on syphilis and immunology, but is worth remembering as a dramatic ethical misconduct.

