

“History of the Disorders of Cardiac Rhythm“

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The diagnosis and treatment of cardiac arrhythmias has a long and fascinating history. From earliest times, no clinical symptom impressed the patient (and the physician) more than an irregular heart beat. Although ancient Chinese pulse theory laid the foundation for the study of arrhythmias and clinical electrophysiology in the 5th century BC, the most significant breakthrough in the identification and treatment of cardiac arrhythmias first occurred in the 20th century. In 1906 described S. Tawara in response to a suggestion by L. Aschoff the histology and anatomy of the atrioventricular connection and its division into two main branches, which have been subsequently named after Tawara. - In the last decades, our knowledge of electrophysiology and pharmacology has increased exponentially. The enormous clinical significance of cardiac rhythm disturbances has favored these advances. On the other hand, circulatory problems of the cardiac vessels have increased enormously, and this has been identified as the primary cause of cardiac rhythm disorders. Coronary heart disease has become not just the most significant disease of all, based on the statistics for cause of death. Arrhythmias are the main complication of ischemic heart disease, and they have been directly linked to the frequently arrhythmogenic sudden death syndrome, which is now presumed to be an avoidable “electrical accident” of the heart. A retrospective look – often charming in its own right – may not only make it easier to sort through the copious details of this field and so become oriented in this universe of important and less important facts: it may also provide the observer with a chronological vantage point from which to view the subject. The study of cardiac electrophysiology and pathophysiology is no dry compendium of facts and figures, but rather a dynamic field of study evolving out of the competition between various ideas, intentions and theories.