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NEUROLOGICAL STAMP

Camillo Golgi (1843–1926)

The Italian physician and biologist Camillo Golgi was born in Corteno (now Corteno Golgi) a tiny village in northern Lombardy. He graduated in Medicine at the University of Pavia in 1865 with a thesis on somatic and hereditary factors in mental illness. Thereafter he became assistant at the Hospital of San Matteo where he worked at the psychiatric clinic headed by Cesare Lombroso. Meanwhile Golgi began to learn histological techniques under the direction of Giulio Bizzozzero at the Institute of General Pathology. In 1872 he moved to Abbiategrasso as chief of the "Pio Luogo degli Incurabili" (a hospital for chronic diseases) where, probably at the beginning of the 1873, he obtained the "black reaction" that was a breakthrough for brain structure research. While in Abbiategrasso Golgi discovered, with this technique, the branching of the axon and the fact that dendrites are not fused in a reticular network; furthermore he performed studies on the structure of the cerebellum and olfactory lobe and noted striatal and cortical lesions in a case of chorea. He returned to Pavia as professor of histology and general pathology and chief of a medical ward at the San Matteo Hospital and made a series of important discoveries that still bear his name: the Golgi tendon organ, the Golgi Mazzoni corpuscles, the Golgi method with potassium dichromate and mercuric chloride, the Golgi-Muller tubules of the peptic glands, the Golgi-Rezzonico myelin's annular apparatus, the cycle of malarian parasites in human blood (Golgi cycle), and finally, the most important, the cytoplasmic Golgi apparatus (or Golgi complex). It is not generally known that Golgi was also a skilled physician who always refused private activity and published important papers on peritoneal blood transfusions, on intestinal worm infection, and on pathological changes of kidney.

Golgi was elected Dean of the medical faculty and Rector of the University of Pavia, Senator of the Italian Reign, honorary doctor of the Universities of Cambridge, Geneva, Kristiania (Oslo), Athens, and Paris (Sorbonne). In 1906 he was awarded the Nobel prize together with the Spanish scientist Santiago Ramon y Cajal. During the first world war Golgi directed a military hospital in Pavia. After the war he continued to teach histology, to perform morpho-

logical research, and to publish papers until 1923. Camillo Golgi died in Pavia on 21 January 1926. The European Community commemorated him in 1994 with a stamp.

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