Summary

François Gigot de la Peyronie, the famous French general surgeon, is very well known among urologists regarding the disease called by his name: Peyronie’s disease. Because his father was also a surgeon, he followed his family tradition and became a doctor. He had gained most of his surgical skills during the civil wars in the 16th century. His academic career in France was outstanding. He was one of the two founders of the Royal Academy of Surgery. He was also the First Surgeon to King Louis XV. Even though he was a great surgeon and university professor, his legacy consists only of numerous case reports and not even one comprehensive textbook. However, his paper on induratio penis plastica attached his name and credit to the disease, and since then it has been called Peyronie’s disease. This chapter consists of the history of the disease, starting with early assumptions of its pathophysiology and treatment up to the current knowledge, which still has dilemmas.

Key Words: History; penile curvature; Peyronie’s disease.

The famous French surgeon François Gigot de la Peyronie is known as the man whose name has been credited with the discovery of Peyronie’s disease (Fig. 1). Despite the fact that he was not the first to describe the condition, his name has become synonymous with this rather enigmatic, although not uncommon, disease. According to the French language, his name (actually last name) should be written as la Peyronie; hence, he signed his name as la Peyronie. But in Anglo-Saxon literature, by mistake or corruption, the name of the disease is called and remains Peyronie’s disease. Today, Peyronie’s disease is known as the accumulation of collagens at and onto the tunica albuginea of the penis, resulting in induration, nodule (plaque), penile curvature, painful erections, and erectile dysfunction.

Life of de la Peyronie

La Peyronie was born in Montpellier in 1678 (1). His father, Raymond, was a local barber surgeon. His mother, Elizabeth, was deeply religious; therefore, he received a
strict Jesuit education. La Peyronie, which literally means “little stone” had followed his father’s tradition of surgery and obtained his license at the city hospital in 1693. Then, he moved to Paris to advance his training with Georges Mareschal, who was the head surgeon of Charite Hospital and the “sun king.” He developed and improved his surgical skills significantly under Georges Mareschal’s mentorship and friendship. During that time, there was great animosity in Europe, particularly in France, among the barber surgeons, the surgeons, and the university-trained physicians.

When he returned to his hometown of Montpellier in 1700, he became the head surgeon at St. Eloi Hospital. He had continued to develop his surgical skills and engaged in teaching, which brought him the chair of the anatomy and surgery clinics at the university. In 1702, he was the commander of the medical corps in the military of Louis XIV. He had participated in the war against the peasants and guerrillas north of Montpellier; during the war, he had extended his talent and skills at abdominal-bowel surgery. He had evolved and developed the end-to-end anastomosis of enterostomy from the war and battlefield conditions (2).

His reputation and good relationship with physicians and nonmedical academic departments helped him to build bridges among them, which resulted in the foundation of the Academy of the Sciences of Montpellier in 1706. In 1715, he returned to Paris for a more lucrative career. He became very famous, and he treated the kings of Poland and Prussia. He founded the Royal Academy of Surgery in 1731 with his former teacher Georges Marechal. He became the First Surgeon to Louis XV after the death of Georges Marechal. He had persuaded the king to acknowledge the tuition given by Ecole de Chirurgie (3).