



Proffered papers: History

The early days of radiology in India

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There is little in the western literature on the early days of radiology in India. The news of Rontgen's discovery reached Calcutta and a Dr Mahendralal Sircar a campaigner for science was probably the first to use X-rays in India. On 20 June 1896 he took a photograph of a hand using Roentgen's apparatus ordered from the Ducretet company in Europe. He noted in his diary that he did not initially obtain a satisfactory picture due to over exposure but succeeded on 23rd June. This is believed to be the first X-Ray taken in India. The brilliant physicist J C Bose returned to India from the UK and in April 1897 he started building his X-Ray apparatus. D M Bose, his nephew, and former Director of the Bose Institute, wrote that after reading a newspaper account of Roentgen's discovery Bose built an X-ray apparatus in Presidency College, Calcutta. Sadly there are no records of this present. The 5th May 1898 edition of the Amrita Bazar Patrika, a respected English daily published in India, published a report 'Professor Bose and the New Light' but sadly no records of this issue exist today. The first hospital to acquire X-ray apparatus is probably Madras Medical college who acquired the equipment in 1900. X-rays were used to treat leukaemias as early as 1902. In 1918 an X-ray machine was installed at Lady Hardinge Medical College Delhi with the first chair in radiology created in 1923.

1923 and all that. Reflections on the centenary of the death day of Wilhelm Conrad Roentgen

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Background: Roentgen's life and times were both quite remarkable. Wilhelm Conrad Roentgen was born in Lennep in Germany on March 27, 1845. This was both before the revolutions of 1848, and before the industrialisation of Germany. He lived through the Austrian-Prussian War of 1866, the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, and the subsequent unification of Germany under Bismarck, dying after the Great War during the Weimar Republic.



During his life he experienced a time of unprecedented scientific, social and technical change. This will be discussed. For his remarkable discovery of X-rays he was awarded the first Nobel Prize for Physics in 1901. Roentgen died in Munich on February 10, 1923 at a time of increasing social unrest, and later that same year on November 8-9 the Beer Hall Putsch (or Munich Putsch) took place. The Beer Hall Putsch was a failed coup d'etat by the Nazi Party leader Adolf Hitler with others.

Purpose:

- To celebrate the life and work of Wilhelm Conrad Roentgen.
- To understand his life in relation to his times.
- To consider the sequelae of the discovery of X-rays.

Wilhelm Roentgen at the time of the discovery of X-rays in 1895

Summary of Content: Roentgen's discovery changed how we view both ourselves and how we view reality. Nothing was quite the same again. All of us owe him a huge debt of gratitude.

1. Glasser, O. (1933) Wilhelm Conrad Roentgen and the Early History of the X-rays. Bale, Sons and Danielsson
2. Thomas, AMK. (2022) Invisible Light, The Remarkable Story of Radiology. Boca Raton: CRC Press (Taylor and Francis Group).
3. Underwood, E. Ashworth. (1957). Wilhelm Conrad Roentgen (1845-1923) and the Early Development of Radiology. In: Sidelights on the history of Medicine. Ed. Z. Cope. London: Butterworth & Co.