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Johannes Müller (1801—1858), one of the fountainheads of modern medicine, was born in Coblenz, Germany. He received his M.D. from the University of Bonn in 1822 and practiced as a physician for only a short period before pursuing an academic career. He was professor of pathology, physiology, and comparative anatomy at the University of Berlin until his retirement.

In Müller’s early work, he recognized the similarity between cells previously observed in plants and those which he observed in animals (Vergleichendes Anatomie der Myxinoiden, Berlin, 1835), thus introducing into biology the cell theory heretofore applied to botany. His greatest contribution is that in which he demonstrated the harmony between the pathological and the embryonic development of tumors (Ueber den feineren Bau und die Formen der Krankhaften Geschwülste. Berlin: G. Reimer, 1838).

Müller’s studies were conducted within the framework of the prevailing blastema theory of cell genesis which held that “globules,” the basic structural element, arose within an amorphous material, blastema, by coagulating into a nucleus around which the rest of the cells formed, in effect, a theory of spontaneous generation.

He is shown on the cover in an 1858 photograph which was kindly supplied by Dr. Peter Olch, National Library of Medicine, Bethesda, Maryland. The cancer cells are sketched after Figs. 6 and 7 of Müller’s famous 1838 work which contains the first reproduction of cancer cells. The original figures are supplied through the courtesy of the New York Academy of Medicine Library.