Dissertation académique sur le cancer,
qui a remporté le prix double de l'Académie des Sciences, Arts & Belles-Lettres de Lyon, le 8 Décembre 1773.

Par Ber. Peyrilhe,

Præter loco mea creatum.

A Paris.
Chez Vuault, libraire, rue de la Harpe.

M. DCC LXXVI.

Title-page of Peyrilhe's dissertation.
Several early attempts to transmit cancer from man to animals are worthy of note.

In 1773 the Academy of Lyon offered a prize for the best thesis on the subject "Qu'est-ce que le Cancer." Bernard Peyrilhe (1735–1804) won the contest with his dissertation. He stressed that cancer initially is a local process, with extensions along the lymphatics, and that "scirrhus" was an earlier, nonulcerated stage of cancer. He also inoculated a dog with fluid extracted from a human breast cancer. An ulcer was produced, and the experiment was terminated by a maid who drowned the howling animal.

Joseph Leidy (1823–1891), professor of anatomy at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, in 1851, reported as follows in the Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Science of Philadelphia (Vol. 5, p. 201):

"Dr. Leidy after some general remarks upon the transplantation of animal tissues, states that about five months ago Dr. Horner removed from a female a scirrhus mamma, a portion of which, at his request, he took home for microscopic examination. In structure it proved to be composed of fibrous tissue and nucleated, elongated, or caudated cells. After the examination, about four hours subsequent to the removal of the tumor from the woman, Dr. L. inserted four pieces of the tumor, each half an inch long by one-eighth of an inch broad and thick, beneath the integument of the back of a large frog. Three of the fragments were pushed forward to the vicinity of the ear. In a few days succeeding the operation, the incision of the skin perfectly cicatrized.

Yesterday upon killing the frog, and opening the skin along the back, it was found that three of the scirrhus fragments had formed a vascular attachment with the integument, and for one half their length had had a large development of capillaries in them. Two of the fragments had also formed a vascular attachment to each other throughout their length. The fourth fragment had formed no attachment with the tissues of the frog, and had remained apparently unchanged. Upon examining the fragments with the microscope, it was found that the caudated cells had been entirely transformed into fibrous tissue.

Dr. L. exhibited a portion of the frog with the fragments of cancer attached. The net-work of blood-vessels pervading the pieces was beautifully distinct to the naked eye."

Leidy is one of the earlier experimental investigators of cancer in the United States. No attempts to repeat his observations appear to have been made.


M.B.S.