

Samuel-Auguste Tissot: an early proponent of process

REFERENCES

Tissot SAD (1771) *Advice to the People in General with Regard to their Health*. Translated from the French edition of Dr Tissot's *Avis Au Peuple sur sa Santé* (1761). Available at: <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/N09616.0001.001> (accessed 10.08 2017)

By the time of publication, the call for abstracts for the Wounds UK Harrogate conference 2017 will be closed. Harking back to last year's conference, the focus was on change, and the entreaty that the industry embrace guidelines and process. More than 250 years prior, a certain Swiss physician was detailing step-by-step processes for the management of burns and wound care, among a catalogue of other maladies. Process and evidence-based practice are core tenets of modern medicine, so further insight into this early harbinger of medical process is most certainly merited.

Whilst the name of Samuel-Auguste Tissot may have gained familiarity in his time due to his penning of a 1760 physiological treatise on the purported diseases arising as a result of masturbation — and the consequent adoption of his views by many luminaries of Western culture for the next 200 years — Tissot is of interest to *Wounds UK* readers for his work on burns and general wound care. Contained within the encyclopaedic reaches of his splendidly generically titled book *Advice to the People in General with Regard to their Health*, Tissot (1771) describes practices that very closely resemble those employed in the present day, and in a level of detail which would delight process-oriented practitioners of any era.

Specifically, Tissot goes to detailed lengths to describe his use of dressings, their composition, and the specific indications that merit their usage, from partial- and full-thickness burns, to cavity wounds, and those requiring surgical intervention. Depending on the type of wound under consideration, a variety of wound contact layers are recommended, and thereafter how they should be held in place. One such example is for full-thickness burns, wherein Tissot specifies the use of an absorbent contact layer under a dressing of wax-impregnated linen: "If the true Skin is burnt, and even the Muscles," a "pledget of soft lint" under "Plaster No. 65" should be employed (Tissot 1771, p223). This is not a far cry from cotton wool and paraffin gauze still found in national formularies today.



Samuel-Auguste Tissot's most famous work in his lifetime was *Advice to the People in General with Regard to their Health* (1771), arguably the greatest medical bestseller of the 18th century

The modern-day medical literature also sees much focus on prevention and management of pain, with the emphasis on patient wellbeing as a primary consideration. One would be forgiven for assuming that this was not the case 250 years ago, yet Tissot describes cases where pain management appears to be foremost: "When a Burn is very trifling and superficial [...] it is sufficient to clap a Compress of several Folds of soft Linen upon it, dipt in cold Water, and to renew it every Quarter of an Hour, till the Pain is entirely removed" (Tissot 1761, p221). Given the often barbaric approaches taken by physicians at the time, Tissot seems almost compassionate to our eyes.

Tissot even extends himself to forthright condemnation of disingenuous practices, namely in the use of ointments — further proving his belief in process and evidence, opining "All the boasted Virtues of a Multitude of Ointments are downright Nonsense or Quackery," adding that "the only Cases in which they should be used, are those in which the Wounds are distinguished with some particular Appearances, which ought to be removed by particular Applications" (Tissot 1771, p224). The latter sentence could be straight out of a current publication of best-practice guidelines, and of course this approach of treating each wound according to its aetiologies and characteristics, and using specific treatments as indicated, is commonplace in the present day.

It is indeed humbling to know that this method, so stridently promulgated today, was in fact being championed centuries ago.

