

# PIERRE FAUCHARD

## The "Father of Modern Dentistry"

### Pierre Fauchard

### O "Pai da Odontologia Moderna"

Wilson Denis Martins <sup>1</sup>

The 17th century saw many advances in all areas of science, technology and medicine. In 1728 Pierre Fauchard, a French dentist, published "Le Chirurgien Dentiste", which contained detailed information about several aspects of contemporary dentistry. Fauchard was followed by John Hunter, in England, who had published his book, "The Natural History of the Human Teeth", and gave the first course of dental lectures at Guy's Hospital in London.

Pierre Fauchard joined the navy at the age of 15, and came under the influence of a navy Surgeon Major, A. Poteleret, who had spent time studying the diseases of the mouth, in special of the dental organs. This man inspired and encouraged Fauchard do real and carefully investigate the findings of his predecessors in the healing arts.

During 3 years, Fauchard, who was a voracious reader with an endless enthusiasm to learn and share with others, acquired skill and knowledge not usually found in someone so young. He returned from the Navy in 1696 and opened a practice in Angers, at that time an University Center.

In 1718 he moved to Paris, where he was called on by eminent general surgeons for dental related consultations and referrals. He was now recognized as he most outstanding dental surgeon in all of France!

Before Fauchard, dentists were called "Dentateurs" (Denture Makers). They were very few and mainly did extractions of the teeth. However, the barbers also extracted teeth and were expert in using leeches for bleeding. Actually barbers were the real surgeons at that time. In Angers, Fauchard described himself as a "Chirurgien Dentiste" (Surgeon Dentist).

Fauchard's practice not only was restricted to remove teeth, but filled carious teeth, removed tartar from around the teeth and benign tumors of the gum. He was particularly skilled in dental prosthesis, one of his specialties. He was the first to consider Dentistry as art and science.

The first Surgeon Dentist, in spite of using the primitive instruments available at that time, was a man of great manual dexterity, ambidextrous, and soon became recognized. He shared freely with all of his colleagues his skills in dental prosthesis. Fauchard believed that the loss of teeth was very unfortunate, but that art and science could replace them. He was a pioneer in the construction of Dentistry as a Science rather than a mere job for skilled but uneducated men.

He made and described many artificial prosthesis and had discovered many methods to replace the loss of a few teeth or all of them. These substitutes presented the best quality at that time and become as useful as the natural ones. He made artificial teeth from carved blocks of ivory, bone, or used human teeth and held them in place supported by the remaining solid teeth, using gold wire.

His prosthesis made of natural teeth or artificial pieces remain in place for 15 to 20 years without becoming displaced. Similarity with modern prosthesis is not mere coincidence.

Fauchard completed the manuscript for "Le Chirurgien Dentiste" in 1723, at the age of 45. After careful review, the book, in two volumes, was published in 1728, in French, and in German in 1773. The book, considered the origin of the scientific dentistry, changed the practice of the profession worldwide. For a century or longer it was the "bible" of dentistry.

" Le Chirurgien Dentiste" has 38 chapters (vol. 1) and 26 chapters (vol. 2). There are 42 plates showing instruments and appliances. Some of his totally new ideas to dentistry can be mentioned:

1. Sugar is detrimental to gums and teeth and its intake should be limited in our daily foods

<sup>1</sup> PhD; Professor de Cirurgia Buco-maxilo-facial e Estomatologia, PUCPR.  
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(The first dentist concerned with prevention...)

2. The deciduous, first or milk teeth, separate themselves from their roots without anyone knowing just what becomes of them. In spite of some dentists say they have no roots, they have.

(Basic concern with children teeth...)

3. Removing the caries and filling teeth will strengthen the teeth

4. The German theory of caries (tooth worm) is probably wrong. Fauchard said that he looked through a microscope many times and have found no worms (Beginning of science...)

5. Teeth should be cleaned periodically by a dentist (Again, concern with prevention...)

6. Avulsed teeth can be replanted and used for many years (The first dental traumatologist...)

7. Fauchard described the first comfortable chair do have dentistry done. Up until this time the dentist and patient sat on the floor, with the patient's head holding on to the dentists knee's. He decided for a comfortable chair because he felt that sitting on the floor was most inappropriate for women, especially those who were pregnant. (Social concerns...and the first ergonomist).

8. He investigated how to recover false teeth with enamel to match a patient's existing teeth.

9. He treated pulpitis with oil of cloves.

Together with these fantastic and advanced ideas, it must be told that Fauchard

advocated the use of urine for some cases of toothache, arising from extensive caries. Urine had been used in the medieval times, regarded as panacea for a range of diseases. It is not surprising that Fauchard was strongly influenced by some beliefs at that dark scientific days. However, it was obvious that he created order out of chaos, established various sound scientific concepts that are still valid and established a real profession from a craft. Pierre Fauchard passed in 1761, at the age of 84.

## References

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