INTRODUCTION

(In)famous neurological injuries and disease: cases and events of historical, political, cultural, and scientific impact

Mark C. Preul, MD,¹ Chris A. Sloffer, MD, MBA,² and James T. Goodrich, MD, PhD³

¹Division of Neurological Surgery, Barrow Neurological Institute, St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center, Phoenix, Arizona; ²Division of Neurosurgery, Bronson Neuroscience Center, Kalamazoo, Michigan; and ³Division of Neurological Surgery, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Montefiore Medical Center, Bronx, New York

This issue of *Neurosurgical Focus* features papers on the topic of how neurological disease has affected the course of the human condition. So many excellent papers were received that this issue will be but Part 1 of a two-part series on this topic, with Part 2 to follow in July 2016.

Perhaps as no other system disease can, neurological disease has altered the course of human history because of how it may alter our personalities, consciousness, and function. The effects of neurological disease or injury are far-reaching. The historical courses of Europe and North

America were altered by the head injuries to the great Russian general, Mikhail Kutuzov. Central figures in this engaging story include those shown in Fig. 1.

Neurological events often present with acute and sometimes chilling symptoms. Although the body may be able to function, the mind may be laid to near waste, or vice versa, and in some cases death may occur quickly. Neurological disease, including head and spinal injuries, have altered our perception of the arts and literature, the development of science and politics, as well as impacted wars and the sur-

FIG. 1. **A:** Catherine II near the end of her life (died 1796): “Catherine II Walking” by Vladimir Borovikovskiy (1794), housed in the Tretyakov Gallery in the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia. Public domain. **B:** Prince Potemkin in military uniform: “Portrait of Russian Statesman Prince G.A. Potyomkin-Tavrichesky” by Johann Baptist von Lampi the Elder (circa 1790), housed in the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia. Public domain. **C:** Portrait of Alexander I by George Dawe (1824), housed in the State Museum in Peterhof Palace Complex, St. Petersburg, Russia. Public domain. **D:** Tolstoy photographed in 1862, immediately before beginning writing *War and Peace* (1863–1869). In the upper left-hand corner, “1862 y. [year] Self-taken” and at the bottom, “Gr. [Count] L.N. Tolstoy Photographed Yasnaya Polyana [Tolstoy’s home].” Kutuzov became a Russian patriotic icon after 1812, thanks much to Tolstoy and the Stalinist historiography that labeled him a military genius. Photograph published with permission from the State Tolstoy Museum.

INCLUDE WHEN CITING DOI: 10.3171/2015.4.FOCUS15207.

DISCLOSURE Dr. Preul reports receiving support for this work from the Newsome Family Chair in Neurosurgery Research.

vival of empires. While some of these events are famous for their surrounding drama and courage, such as the death of Admiral Horatio Nelson from a gunshot wound to the spinal cord, others are rather infamous and tragic, such as the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln.

The content in this issue is ordered chronologically. In terms of subjects, these marvelous papers by Sanchez, Kushchayev et al., Koul et al., Boettcher et al., and Holland et al. examine neurological injuries and disease that literally altered civilizations and the course of world wars. Related articles by Menger et al., Son, and Nijensohn detail political intrigue connected with neurological disease, whereas the work of Manjila et al. and Man et al. describe the effects of neurological complications on the field of science. This issue also addresses topics on the seminal

contributions of neurosurgeons in preventing neurological disease or injury in a paper by Rehder and Cohen and one by Brewster et al.

These authors are to be congratulated for the excellence of their research, all requiring painstaking historical and archival work not normally within the usual easy grasp of searching for and reporting modern scientific results. Several of the studies required cooperation with foreign governments and sources, including work in other languages. The superb illustrations in many of the articles elegantly enliven the reading experience. Through their works, these neurosurgical historians help us understand the complexity of neurological disease within our specialty as it relates to the fabric of society and its full impact on humanity.