

Correspondence

When brain bullets met crowdfunding

Stereotaxy — a surgical technique that uses a head clamp to pinpoint brain areas from coordinates of external landmarks and anatomical structures — was first applied in the nineteenth century, when it went largely unnoticed by the medical community. It was 'reinvented' 50 years later and is routinely used today, for example in deep-brain stimulation for diseases such as Parkinson's.

Gaston Contremoulins (1869–1950) was the self-educated physicist who invented the 'metroradiographic' frame that marked the birth of stereotactic surgery (pictured). It was first used in 1897 to guide the removal of bullets from the brains of two young men who had survived after shooting themselves in the head.

This surgical triumph was crowdfunded following a public appeal by Contremoulins. It was reported in the French weekly newspaper *l'Illustration* and aroused great popular interest. In the scientific press, it attracted just a single report — in the proceedings of the French Academy of Sciences, *Compte-rendus Hebdomadaires de l'Académie des Sciences*.

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