

**Mini Review**

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# Cardiology is Born in 1749 Under the Pen of Jean-Baptiste Sénac

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In the year 1749, in Paris, a work entitled "Textbook on the structure of the heart, its action and its diseases" [1] was published. It is written in French. Its author is Jean-Baptiste Sénac, personal physician to the King, Louis XV. It is the first known work that attempts to bring together all the knowledge of the time on the heart, which is why history retains it as the first stone of a building that will later be called « Cardiology ». Jean-Baptiste Sénac (1693-1770) [2], initially trained at the University of Leiden, then in Montpellier, then went to Paris and became an anatomist. In 1752, the King of France, Louis XV, chose him as his first doctor. The king kept his confidence in him until his death, in 1770. JB Sénac's textbook was reissued in 1774, in Paris, on the initiative of Antoine Portal [3]. It will be enriched with drawings of the structures of the heart.

Before 1749 and the publication of the famous textbook, several authors studied the heart and its vessels, especially its anatomy and physiology. Thus Leonard de Vinci (1452-1519), establishes a link, in 1513, between cardiac contraction and vascular pulsation [4] and draws the aortic valve. But his works remained confidential and were rediscovered at the beginning of the 20th century. William Harvey (1578-1657), English doctor, published in 1628 his work on small and large circulation, a major scientific advance. The publication is in Latin language « *Exercitatio Anatomica de Motu Cordis et Sanguinis in Animalibus* » (Anatomy of heart and blood movement in animals) [5]. In 1669, another English physician, Richard Lower (1631-1691) published in Latin language « *Tractatus de Corde, item de Motu et colore Sanguinis, et chyle in*

*eum tranfitu* » (Textbook on the heart, on the movement and color of the blood, and the chyle which passes through it) [6]. This book contains mainly notions of physiology and anatomy with drawing boards of the structures of the heart, the pericardium and the lungs. It describes new ideas about changing the color of blood by mixing blood and inspired air. Raymond Vieussens (1641-1715), French physician and renowned anatomist published in 1705 « *Novum vasorum corporis humani systema* » (A new vascular system of the human body) [7]. Having performed hundreds of autopsies, he describes the symptoms of mitral stenosis. But all these publications are written in Latin language and are therefore only accessible to an intellectual elite. This is also the case of an Austrian doctor, Leopold Auenbrugger (1722-1809), who published in 1761, in Latin, his invention: « *Inventum novum ex percussione thoracis humani ut signo abstrusos interni pectoris morbos detegendi* » (New invention of chest percussion in humans to detect signs of hidden intrathoracic diseases) [8]. Son of a restaurateur, he learned very young to assess the contents of wine barrels by knocking on their walls. But his discovery, an interesting method for the clinical examination of the thorax and the exploration of its contents, only really spread thanks to Jean-Nicolas Corvisart (1755-1821), French doctor to Napoleon Bonaparte. In 1808, he translated Auenbrugger's book into French and thus ensured the dissemination of the method for the medical profession [9]. A few years later, in 1816, auscultation developed with the discovery of the first stethoscope (« *pectoriloque* ») by René-Théophile-Hyacinthe Laennec (1781-1826). This French doctor published in 1819, in French, a reference

work « De lauscultation mediate » (On mediate auscultation) [10]. This auscultation technique is revolutionizing the practice of clinical examination [11].

“Thus, the textbook of Jean-Baptiste Sénac marked the effective birth of cardiology. It contains in particular a good study of arrhythmias, dyspnea, hemoptysis, and edema of cardiac origin. With great foresight, Jean-Baptiste Sénac subordinates the future development of this specialty to the discovery of new means of exploration” [12].

### Acknowledgment

The name of the first author, Cénac, is an homonym of Sénac. There is no known relationship.

### Conflict of Interest

None.

### References

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