

## Did Carlo Giacomini's brain exhibit a band of Giacomini?

The title of the column raises the following question: was the band of Giacomini discovered by Carlo Giacomini himself during his neuroanatomical studies, or later on Giacomini's brain during his post mortem examination? In other words, is the term band of Giacomini a nonpossessive or a possessive eponym?

Eponyms are terms that associate the name of a person (or sometimes persons) with a structure, disease, syndrome, or any of a number of other things (Haines and Olry, 2003). They could be divided into two categories: possessive or nonpossessive. For example, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis is legitimately called Lou Gehrig's disease in the United States for this famous baseball player actually had, and died of, this disease: Lou Gehrig's disease is therefore a possessive eponym. But amyotrophic lateral sclerosis is also called Charcot's disease in Europe, Jean-Martin Charcot having described it in 1874: Charcot's disease is therefore a nonpossessive eponym.

### Carlo Giacomini

Carlo Giacomini was professor of anatomy at the University of Turin. Though best remembered for his description of the uncus band in 1882, he made numerous other contributions to human gross anatomy, including the description of the posterior accessory saphenous vein (1873) and the "cardiac vertebrae" (1886). He died of an apoplectic stroke on July 5, 1898, at the age of 58.

### The band of Giacomini

The term band of Giacomini was coined in 1896 by Gustav Retzius to refer to a small uncal formation discovered by Carlo Giacomini in 1882, as appears in his 1884 treatise: "*nella sua terminazione anteriore da me descritta col nome di Benderella d'ell Uncus*" (The anterior end [of the fascia dentate] of which I described as the uncus band: Giacomini, 1884). The band of Giacomini is the margo denticulatus (visible part of the gyrus dentatus) on the surface of the posterior segment of the uncus, which it separates into a posterior intralimbic gyrus and an anterior uncinat gyrus (Duvernoy, 1988). It is believed to extend to the anterior end of the structure Christoph Theodor Aebly called velum terminale in 1871 (Ludwig and Klingler, 1956). The band of Giacomini is sometimes called the tail of the dentate gyrus, Giacomini's fascia, fasciculus, frenulum or limbus (Terra, 1913), uncus band, or limbus unci (Ludwig and Klingler, 1956).



### Post mortem examination

In his last will and testament dated June 22, 1898, Carlo Giacomini had expressed his wish to be autopsied "*dove ho passato I più bei anni della mia gioventù*". This was performed two days after his death, on July 7, 1898 by Giuseppe Sperino, professor of human anatomy at the University of Modena, probably with two of his assistants: doctors Varaglia and Bovero. On page 34 of his 1900 printed report, we can read: "*la fimbria, la fascia dentate, la benderella dell'uncus(Giacomini), la fasciola cinerea sono normali*" (the fimbria, dentate gyrus, uncus band, gyrus fasciolaris are normal: Sperino, 1900).

We can now answer the question raised in the title of this column. Carlo Giacomini's brain actually exhibited a band of Giacomini, a term which is therefore both a possessive and a nonpossessive eponym.

### **Suggested readings**

Sperino G. (1900) L'encefalo dell'anatomico Carlo Giacomini. Torino: Unione tipografico-editrice.

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### **Illustration**

Portrait of Carlo Giacomini. Taken from Sperino, *op. cit.*

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