

Presentation Speech

Presentation Speech by Professor W. Wernstedt, Dean of the [Royal Caroline Institute](#), on December 10, 1927

Your Majesty, Your Royal Highnesses, Ladies and Gentlemen.

[Fibiger](#) won his laurels in the field of theoretical medicine, researching into the cause of a specific disease. Turning to the work that led Wagner-Jauregg to the list of Nobel Prize winners, we enter the field of practical medicine, or more exactly, the wide field where the means of healing diseases are sought. The disease in the treatment of which Wagner-Jauregg acquired such great merit is general paralysis, a mental disease which, on a syphilitic background, leads to a fatal idiocy and paralysis. It is therefore a very serious and moreover not uncommon disease.

Up to the arrival of Wagner-Jauregg, we were practically without any means of healing general paralysis, or even of influencing its course and outcome substantially and with any certainty. The inaccessibility of the paralysis to treatment, and its development leading as a rule directly to death within a few years even came to be regarded as a criterion whether the diagnosis of paralysis had been correct in cases where at first doubt had prevailed in this respect. It should be clear that whoever is successful in finding a means to eliminate such a disease, has thereby made an achievement of the greatest benefit to mankind. Wagner-Jauregg has performed such a deed and it is for this that he is to be rewarded today with the Nobel Prize for Medicine for the year 1927.

How then did Wagner-Jauregg proceed to heal the unfortunate victims of this terrible disease? There is a saying «one must expel evil with evil» that might aptly have been coined as a motto for his treatment of paralysis. He healed the mental patients by infecting them with another disease-malaria.

For a long time, ever since Hippocrates, it has been observed that every now and then, mental patients were healed or favourably influenced, when they were attacked by a fever. It was this ancient observation, which Wagner-Jauregg also made himself, that excited the idea in him, whether one could not obtain an effective method of treatment for chronic mental patients by infecting them with a febrile disease.