

**Thomas Jonnesco versus Wilhem von Waldeyer. Rectum sheath or fascia propria recti? The story of a wandering idea**

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**Abstract**

Anatomical knowledge of rectum and its fascial relationship is crucial in modern surgery and it represents the basis of total mesorectal excision. Most of the contemporary authors make reference to Waldeyer's description and use the name fascia propria recti. However, there are evidence regarding Thomas Jonnesco's priority in describing this fascial structure 5 years before Waldeyer. Thomas Jonnesco's description was published in a famous anatomy textbook: *Traité d'Anatomie Humaine*, Paris, Bataille, 1894, editor P. Poirier, where Thomas Jonnesco was the author of volume 4, fascicule 1, containing the anatomy of the digestive system. His description of the rectum sheath precedes Waldeyer's publication (*Das Becken*, Cohen, Bonn, 1899). The description of the rectum sheath is included also into the second edition of *Traité d'Anatomie Humaine* (editors P. Poirier and A. Charpy) published again in 1901 at Masson Publishing House. This second version, better known by contemporary authors (Chapuis et al. *Dis Colon Rectum* 2002;45:1), probably revised by Charpy, is no more so simple and so clear as the first one. In our paper Thomas Jonnesco's original description of rectal fascia (rectum sheath), published in 1894, is facsimiled, the two successive editions of the book are compared and a comparison with Waldeyer's description of fascia propria recti is done. The priority of Thomas Jonnesco seems to be well proved. In this respect our own research is in line with the observations of Chapuis and Bell si colab. (*Dis Colon Rectum* 2000;43:90).

**Key words:** rectum sheath, fascia propria recti, total mesorectal excision, rectum anatomy, Thomas Jonnesco, Wilhem von Waldeyer

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