

## History of Tinnitus

In description of tinnitus, famous persons who suffered from tinnitus are often mentioned. Joan of Arc, also known as "the Maid of Orleans" lived during 1412 – 1431, is described to suffer from tinnitus. Even as being born in a peasant family she led the French Army to several important victories during the "Hundred Years' War". However, her tinnitus did not cause of her early death, she had additional significant stressors in life to consider.

Ludwig van Beethoven is another famous person suffering from tinnitus. He is one of the most gifted composers and lived between 1770 and 1827. In spite of his severe symptoms, he produced the greatest music for us to enjoy. Another composer, Bedrich Smetana, described his tinnitus as "high E".

Charles Darwin, (1809-82) well known for his book "On the Origin of Species", kept records of its daily amplitude and frequency

Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni, or only "Michelangelo" was another famous person with tinnitus. He lived between 1475 and 1564 and was a true renaissance man. He lived during the same period as his rival and fellow Italian Leonardo da Vinci.

### Ideas from the past

Historical descriptions of tinnitus have depended highly on cultural factors. In the ancient Oriental mysticism tinnitus was regarded as sensitivity to the divine. The old Egyptians believed that tinnitus occur from a bewitched ear and as treatment they infused oils or herbs in the outer ear canal. During the Middle Ages, this strategy continued and different substances were used.

During the 400 century BCE, Hippocrates and Aristoteles, introduced the idea of masking and suggested: "Why is it that buzzing in the ear ceases if one makes a sound. Is it because a greater sound drives out the less?"

In the Babylonian Talmud, tinnitus appears as the "curse of Titus": described as a buzzing in the brain, responded to sound therapy, and then habituating.

Now days, sound therapy is a common used therapy for tinnitus. It was first administered in high levels to mask tinnitus (Feldmann, 1971; Vernon, 1977), to be replaced by low- dose white band noise generators (Jastreboff and Hazell, 1993).

In the Roman medicine tinnitus was regarded as being associated with depressive and seizure disorders and these conditions were presumed to have a common pathophysiology. However, now days when we explain these pathways it is done in a completely different way (Holgers et al 2005)

## Report from the 20<sup>th</sup> century

During the first part of the 20th century, an otolaryngologist by the name of R.L. Wegel stated in 1931 in an article published in Arch. Otolaryngology : *"Tinnitus is a pathologic symptom . . . I am under the impression that the presence of tinnitus.....generally indicates an active or progressive lesion and that the cessation of it.....is an indication that the degeneration or atrophy of tissue has been arrested"*. However he continued and said: *"people entirely without tinnitus are extremely rare, if such cases exist at all."*

When Edmund P. Fowler published articles on tinnitus in the beginning of the forties, he first suggesting tinnitus to be present together with deafness, but he altered this conclusion writing: *"It may be, and often is, present in some form in persons who have no apparent aural or other disease."*

Lempert described tinnitus on the basis of his observations associated with middle ear surgery that *"tonus impulses originating in the sensory fibers of the trigeminus, the sympathetic, or glossopharyngeal may enter the tympanic plexus, but normally [are] not heard."*

## References

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