

History Page: Leaders in MSK Radiology

Jacques Forestier (1890–1978)

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Abstract

This history page in the series “Leaders in MSK Radiology” is dedicated to the memory and achievements of the French physician Jacques Forestier, whose name is connected with the medical eponym Forestier’s disease, later referred to as diffuse idiopathic skeletal hyperostosis.

Keywords

- ▶ Forestier’s disease
- ▶ History
- ▶ Radiography

Dr. Jacques Forestier (–**Fig. 1**) was a French physician known for his groundbreaking and pioneering work in the field of rheumatology and spinal imaging. He was born in Aix-les-Bains, France, in 1890 into a family with a long medical tradition.¹ His father, Henri Forestier, was a director at the therapeutic spas in Aix-les-Bains.

Following his studies in medicine in Paris and the outbreak of the First World War, Forestier served as a battalion physician. He distinguished himself as a war hero and received the Légion d’honneur and Croix de Guerre, the highest French military honors.

Forestier was also known as a very active and successful sportsman in swimming, skiing, and rugby. As part of the French University rugby team, he was selected for the international game of Wales versus France in 1912 and for the Olympic Games held in Antwerp in 1920 in which France won the silver medal.

After the First World War, Forestier completed his postgraduate education in Jean-Athanase Sicard’s Department of Neurology at the Faculty of Medicine in Paris. While studying elimination of intramuscular injected iodinated oil contrast (Lipiodol) in rabbits, he accidentally

injected some contrast into the spinal canal that led to the discovery of the technique of Lipiodol myelography. The data of his studies on the intrathecal use of Lipiodol were presented at the Congress of Radiology in the United States in 1925.

Forestier’s second major contribution to musculoskeletal radiology was his very detailed clinical and radiologic description of a condition he called “senile hyperostosis of the spine” that later was named after him as “Forestier’s disease” and is currently referred to as diffuse idiopathic skeletal hyperostosis (DISH) in the Anglo-Saxon literature.² The results of this scientific contribution were presented at the joint meeting of the Ligue Française contre le Rhumatisme and the British Heberden Society held in Paris in 1950.¹

His interest also focused on another rheumatologic condition that he called pseudo-polyarthrite rhizomélisque, currently referred to as polymyalgia rheumatica. Forestier did his clinical work at the rheumatology clinic at the famous Hôpital Cochin (Assistance Publique) in Paris, where he worked closely together with other musculoskeletal disciplines and was highly regarded as an educator.



Fig. 1 Photograph of Professor Jacques Forestier. (Reproduced from *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases*, Kersley G.D., 37, 388, 1978 with permission from BMJ Publishing Group Ltd.)

Forestier was a prolific author of scientific articles. He also published a textbook in 1951 with coauthors Jacqueline and Rotés-Querol, *La Spondylarthrite Ankylosante: Clinique, Radiologie, Anatomie Pathologique, Traitement*, on disorders of the spine (► **Fig. 2**). The book was translated into English in 1956, underscoring its worldwide impact.³

He was keynote speaker of many scientific societies throughout the world. Professor Forestier received several awards and honors. He became Doctor Honoris Causa at Geneva University in Switzerland, member of the French Academy of Medicine, as well as an honorary member of numerous other medical societies including the American Rheumatism Association. For his achievements as an athlete, the Olympic stadium in Aix-les-Bains was named after him.

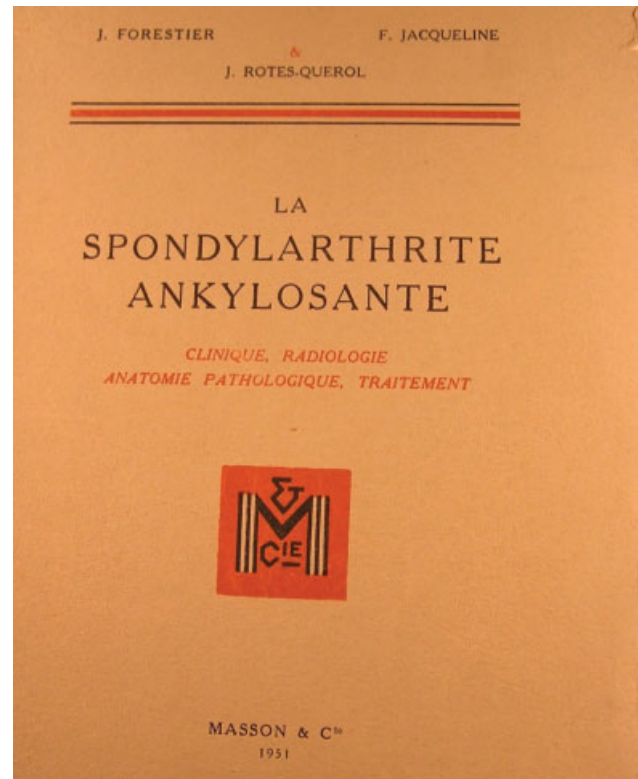


Fig. 2 Cover page of the French edition of Forestier's textbook. (Courtesy of Dr. R. Van Tiggelen, Belgium.)

Jacques Forestier died at age 88 on March 16, 1978, the day after he received a final lifetime achievement award at a scientific meeting in Paris.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

References

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