Pierre-Fidele Bretonneau Encyclopedia Article

Pierre-Fidele Bretonneau

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Pierre-Fidele Bretonneau

1778-1862

French physician who performed the first successful tracheotomy, a surgical procedure involving the creation of an incision in the windpipe to make an artificial breathing tube. He also recognized and named the disease diphtheria. Bretonneau received a medical degree in Paris in 1815 and became head of the hospital at Tours in 1816. He determined that specific organisms caused specific diseases, foreshadowing the germ theory of Louis Pasteur (1822-1895), and recognized that typhoid fever and typhus were separate diseases. Bretonneau was also convinced that diphtheria was contagious and tried in vain to infect animals, a feat later accomplished by other scientists.