



Eponyms in elbow fracture surgery



Matthijs P. Somford, MD^{a,*}, Johannes I. Wiegerinck, MD^b, Daniël Hoornenborg, MD^c, Michel P.J. van den Bekerom, MD^d, Denise Eygendaal, MD, PhD^e

^aDepartment of Orthopaedic Surgery, Medisch Spectrum Twente, Enschede, The Netherlands

^bDepartment of Orthopaedic Surgery, Academic Medical Center, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

^cDepartment of Orthopaedic Surgery, Slotervaart Hospital, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

^dDepartment of Orthopaedic Surgery, Onze Lieve Vrouwe Gasthuis, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

^eDepartment of Orthopaedic Surgery, Amphio Hospital, Breda, The Netherlands

Eponyms are common in medicine and in orthopaedic surgery. For future reference and historical considerations, we present common eponyms in elbow fracture surgery. We describe in short the biography of the name giver and give, where possible, the original description on which the eponym was based. Whether eponyms should continue to be used is a question that remains unanswered, but if we use them, knowledge of the original description can prevent confusion and knowledge of the historical background sheds light on the interesting roots of our profession.

Level of evidence: Narrative Review.

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Eponyms are commonly used in orthopaedic and trauma surgery. The word *eponym* is derived from the Ancient Greek language and means “named after.” In general, a surgical procedure, disease, or fracture pattern that is named after the person who discovered it or has described it first becomes an eponym. For several reasons, it can be confusing to use eponyms in orthopaedic or trauma surgery; some surgeons prefer strict criteria and classification systems instead of eponyms for the description of, for example, fracture patterns. As the terminology falls into disuse, the recognition and appropriate use of the eponymic terms can become more and more difficult. Lack of knowledge of the history of orthopaedic surgery among

surgeons results in a situation in which the individual’s name and connected history often remain obscure or unknown to the user of the eponym. It is hoped that this report will serve as a reference and a resource for all orthopaedic and trauma surgeons using eponyms in elbow fracture surgery (Fig. 1).

Holstein-Lewis Fracture

Arthur Holstein (1914 to October 26, 2000) was born in Waterbury, Connecticut. He moved to San Francisco, East Bay Area, in 1946. He worked at the Alta Bates Hospital in Berkeley, where he lived with his wife, Joan, who was from Lyon, France.²⁵

Gwylim B. (Bill) Lewis (June 2, 1914, to September 17, 2009) was born in Redlands, California (Fig. 2). His father

*Reprint requests: Matthijs P. Somford, MD, Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Medisch Spectrum Twente, PO Box 50000, NL-7500 KA Enschede, The Netherlands.

E-mail address: mp_somford@hotmail.com (M.P. Somford).

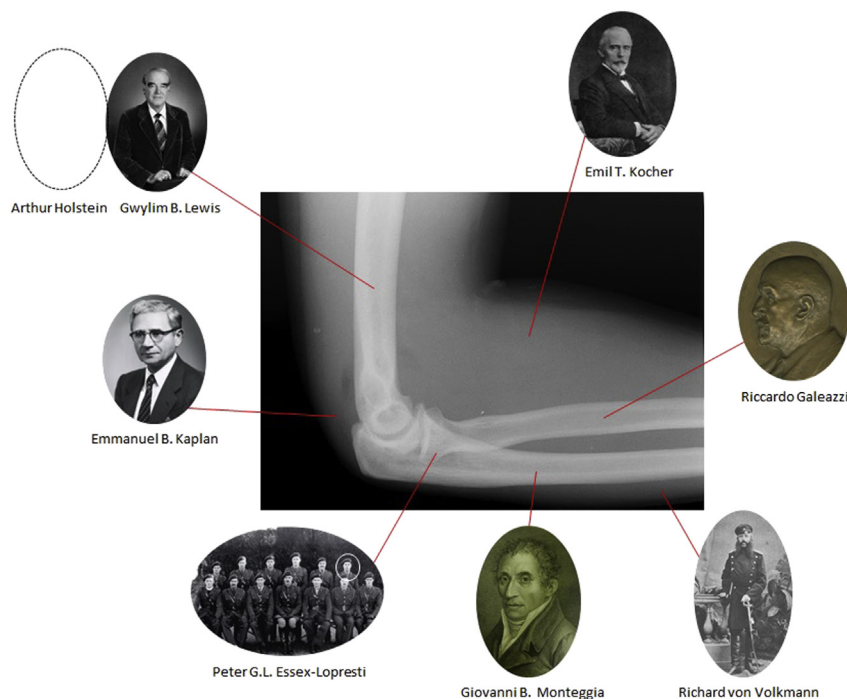


Figure 1 Overview of eponyms discussed.

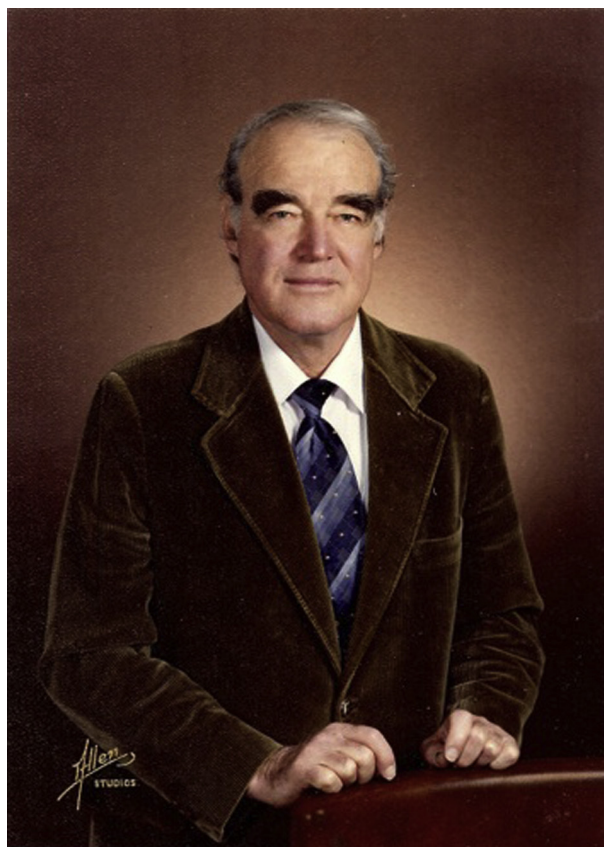


Figure 2 Gwyllim B. Lewis. (courtesy of Martha Lewis)

was originally from Wales, where the name Gwyllim is common. Lewis met his wife while studying at the University of Redlands. After graduating, he attended Northwestern University Medical School in Chicago, Illinois. In 1941 he joined the US Navy. During World War II, he completed pilot training and he served aboard the escort carrier USS Savo Island as the ship's flight surgeon. His ship was stationed in the South Pacific and survived among others a kamikaze attack at the Battle of Leyte Gulf (the largest naval battle in World War II and perhaps in history; October 23-26, 1944). He specialized in orthopaedics before leaving the navy in 1948. He used to joke that he specialized in "the skin and its contents." For 40 years, he worked at Alta Bates Hospital, Berkeley. He lived in Berkeley with his wife and children. After retirement from private practice, he consulted until he was 89.²⁶

First described in 1963, a Holstein-Lewis fracture is a fracture of the distal third of the humerus with possibility of radial nerve entrapment or laceration, resulting in paralysis.¹⁰

Essex-Lopresti Injury

Peter Gordon Lawrence Essex-Lopresti (April 7, 1915, to June 13, 1951) was born in London. Qualifying in 1937 after his training at the London Hospital, he started training to become an anesthesiologist but changed his career in 1940 by becoming a resident in orthopaedic surgery. He

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