First Cases of Temporal Arteritis: Bayard T. Horton, MD (1895-1980)

In the December 7th, 1932, edition of the Proceedings of the Staff Meetings of the Mayo Clinic, Dr Bayard T. Horton and colleagues shared information regarding the discovery of a new entity: temporal arteritis.1 Although the first case was described by another physician in 1930,2 for Dr Horton and the Mayo Clinic, these two cases represented an as yet unknown condition and he and his colleagues were the first to complete biopsies of the vessels, broadening the understanding of this perplexing and debilitating condition.3

The patients described in his initial report came to the clinic in the spring of 1931 with a variety of complaints including fever, head-ache, tenderness of the scalp, and general malaise. Although the abstracts for this research were officially published elsewhere, in this summary of the Staff Meetings, Dr Horton described in detail the elements revealed in the biopsies.

Sections retrieved from both patients appeared identical, leading him to consider this to perhaps be a clinical syndrome, and he provided evidence for hypothesizing on a possible course of the disease development.1 Giving a condition a name and definition is the first step toward understanding, and thus providing relief to patients. Dr Horton became a leading expert in the study of this condition, among other things, such as cluster headaches, and by 1946 he had published a report describing 39 cases of temporal arteritis.3

Dr Horton received his MD degree from the University of Virginia in 1922 and came to Mayo Clinic in 1925 to complete his fellowship. He became a staff member of Mayo Clinic in 1929 and retired from the clinic in 1958.3

References

