

Robert N Braun (1914 – 2007)

Austrian pioneer researcher in general practice

His scientific reasoning started in his first year in general practice. He, who had been a brilliant student at the University Medical school of Vienna, lacked the knowledge how to apply all he knew on his patients. How come, that he was not taught this?

Following his antique model Hippocrates, by carefully and critically watching, by writing down what he saw in his practice, he gradually realized that he was exploring a vast, but unknown scientific territory. Braun made a clear distinction between traditional medical science, initiated by Vesal's anatomy, leading to today's "molecular"- knowledge on diseases, on diagnosing and on treating them. But this is only one half of the global medical science. The other half of the globe is the *science of applied medicine*, which lags far behind, according Braun. The entrance in this field of research is not anatomy but epidemiology. In Braun's case this was (general) practice epidemiology. So his first books were on detailed frequency statistics of patients' complaints seen in general practice.(2,3) And he found out that there is a sort of natural law of regular occurrence of disorders. A prerequisite for this discovery was his consistent labelling of the complaints.

Braun continued his observations in his own practice, now concentrating also on the diagnostic approach. In 1970 he published his first textbook on general practice, followed by diagnostic protocols/checklists in 1976.(4,5)

His concern always was to see it as a challenge: How to apply medical knowledge best on the patient in front of you, being aware of the constraints of time, means, money, manpower, society? For him, this was not so much an art but rather knowledge yet to be explored in the *terra incognita*, in which he had laid routes and in which still a lot of research has to be done. Road markings can be found in the writings of Braun.

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Books by Robert N Braun (English titles by Waltraud Fink – except *UNDERSTANDING GENERAL PRACTICE* – because there is no English translation of all his other books)

- 1) Braun RN (1945/46) **Kritik am Arztum und dessen Reform.** Unveröffentlichte Monographie
Critique on the medical profession and its reform. Unpublished monography.
- 2) Braun,RN (1957) **Die gezielte Diagnostik in der Praxis. Grundlagen und Krankheitshäufigkeit.** Schattauer, Stuttgart
The specific diagnostic approach in general practice. Basics and illness frequencies.
- 3) Braun,RN (1961) **Feinstruktur einer Allgemeinpraxis. Diagnostische und statistische Ergebnisse.** Schattauer, Stuttgart
Microstructure of a primary care practice. Diagnostic and statistical results.
- 4) Braun RN (1970) **Lehrbuch der ärztlichen Allgemeinpraxis.** Urban&Schwarzenberg, München Berlin Wien
Braun RN (1979): **Pratique, critique et enseignement de la médecine générale.** Payot Bibliothèque Scientifique, Paris (Ouvrage publié sous les auspices de la Société française de médecine générale (New edition 1997)
Textbook on general practice.
- 5) Braun RN (1976) **Diagnostische Programme in der Allgemeinmedizin.** Urban&Schwarzenberg, München Berlin Wien
Braun RN, Mader FH (New edition 2005) **Programmierte Diagnostik in der Allgemeinmedizin. 82 Checklisten für Anamnese und Untersuchung.** 5.Auflage Springer, Berlin Heidelberg New York
Diagnostic protocols in general practice.
- 6) Braun RN (1982) **Allgemeinmedizin - Standort und Stellenwert in der Heilkunde.** Kirchheim, Mainz
Société française de médecine générale (1983): Documents de recherches en médecine générale N° 7-8 **La médecine générale - sa position et son rôle dans la médecine.**
- 7) Braun RN (1986) **Lehrbuch der Allgemeinmedizin - Theorie, Fachsprache und Praxis.** Kirchheim, Mainz
Aitken Ashley M, Braun Robert N, Fraillon JMG (1985) **UNDERSTANDING GENERAL PRACTICE.** Printed by The Victorian Academy for General Practice (conducted under the aegis of The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners – Victorian Faculty)
Braun RN, Fink W, Kamenski G (New edition 2007) **Lehrbuch der Allgemeinmedizin - Theorie, Fachsprache und Praxis.** Berger, Horn
Textbook on general practice – Theory, concepts and practice.
- 8) Braun RN (1988) **Wissenschaftliches Arbeiten in der Allgemeinmedizin. Einführung in die eigenständige Forschungsmethode. Einführung in die eigenständige Forschungsmethode.** Springer, Berlin Heidelberg New York London Paris Tokio
Research in Primary care. Introduction to its particular research method.
- 9) Landolt-Theus P, Danninger H, Braun RN (1992) **Kasugraphie. Benennung der regelmäßig häufigen Fälle in der Allgemeinmedizin.** 1.Auflage Kirchheim, Mainz (2.Auflage1994)
Contrat de recherche CRI – INSERM, Groupe IMAGE – ENSP Rosowsky O, Andral J, Cittee J, de Coulboeuf J, Harari A (1999) **La Casugraphie.** Le concept de « cas » selon R.N.Braun dans la gestion du risque en situation diagnostique « ouverte » Adaptation à la CIM 10
Casugraphy. Labelling the cases occurring with regular frequency in primary care.
- 10) Braun RN (1994) **Mein Fall. Allgemeinmedizin für Fortgeschrittene: 244 Problemfälle aus der täglichen Praxis mit Kommentar.** Springer (Neue Allgemeinmedizin) Berlin Heidelberg New York London Paris Tokio
My case. General practice for advanced readers: 244 difficult cases from daily practice, with comments.
- 11) Braun RN, Fink W, Kamenski G (2004) **Angewandte Medizin – Wissenschaftliche Grundlagen.** Facultas, Wien
Applied medicine – scientific foundations.

Robert N Braun's "House of General Practice"

comprehensive approach	<i>primary care management</i>		specific problem solving
	<p style="text-align: center;">Background</p> <p>The Austrian pioneer researcher Robert N Braun (1914-2007) dedicated his life to build a solid, scientifically based knowledge on what is going on in everyday general practice. In association with his research activities, Braun imagined a "house of general practice" of which he had laid the foundations and whose fictitious rooms are yet partly "furnished" by his research findings.</p>	 <p>Braun RN (1982) Allgemeinmedizin - Standort und Stellenwert in der Heilkunde. Kirchheim, Mainz Société française de médecine générale (1983) : DOCUMENTS DE RECHERCHES EN MÉDECINE GÉNÉRALE N° 7-8 La médecine générale - sa position et son rôle dans la médecine.</p> <p>Primary care – its position and role in medicine A critical, sober analysis of the situation of general practice as a specific discipline concerning research, teaching and continuous medical education.</p>	
Integration, collaboration with other specialists in the fields of secondary and tertiary care			
<p>Braun RN (1976) Diagnostische Programme in der Allgemeinmedizin. Urban&Schwarzenberg, München Berlin Wien</p> <p>Braun RN, Mader FH (2005) Programmierte Diagnostik in der Allgemeinmedizin. 82 Checklisten für Anamnese und Untersuchung. 5.Auflage Springer, Berlin Heidelberg New York</p> <p>Diagnostic protocols in general practice.</p> <p>Introduction of 12 "windows" for grouping the <i>cases</i> of illness for statistical and practical reasons; for 87 different reasons for encounter Braun provides protocols/checklists for the diagnostic approach in primary care setting - developed from daily practice experience.</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Research question</p> <p>What should be on the research agenda? To which extent can RN Braun's books contribute to define specific areas for research in primary care, in order to establish this agenda?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Method</p> <p>Features of all the books written by Braun are highlighted and the content is classified according its matching with one or more topics on his own research fields, and with the WONCA core competencies, respectively.</p>	<p>Landolt-Theus P, Danninger H, Braun RN (1992) Kasographie. Benennung der regelmäßig häufigen Fälle in der Allgemeinmedizin. 1.Auflage Kirchheim, Mainz (2.Auflage 1994)</p> <p>Contrat de recherche CRI – INSERM, Groupe IMAGE – ENSP Rosowsky O, Andral J, Cittee J, de Couliboef J, Harari A (1999) La Casographie. Le concept de « cas » selon R.N.Braun dans la gestion du risque en situation diagnostique « ouverte » Adaptation à la CIM 10 www.gretec</p> <p>Casography. Labelling the cases occurring with regular frequency in primary care. Standardised descriptions of terms, applied to <i>cases/episodes</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Presented signs and symptoms, ● physical examination and investigation findings, hints at diagnostic checklists, ● degree of diagnostic certainty, ● usual course of the particular illness, ● other terms and especially potentially life-threatening conditions that need to be considered, ● suggestions for coding in ICD 10/ ICPC2 	
Intellectual "tools" (checklists, guidelines)			

<p>Braun RN (1970) Lehrbuch der ärztlichen Allgemeinpraxis. Urban&Schwarzenberg, München Berlin Wien</p> <p>Braun RN (1979): Pratique, critique et enseignement de la médecine générale. Payot Bibliothèque Scientifique, Paris (Ouvrage publié sous les auspices de la Société française de médecine générale (New edition 1997)</p> <p>Textbook on general practice.</p> <p>This masterpiece gives an insight in the complexity of general practice, 477 practice encounters illustrate the theoretical reasoning and the need for vocational training.</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Results</p> <p>The content of Braun's books relate to one, but often to two or three of the following areas, identified by him himself as specific general practice research areas:</p> <p>1) basic knowledge, 2) practice-based epidemiology (statistics on cases frequencies), 3) concepts for the new special discipline: primary care, 4) intellectual "tools" (checklists, guidelines), 5) integration.</p> <p>These areas correspond mainly with WONCA's core competencies:</p> <p>a) primary care management, b) specific problem solving and c) comprehensive approach.</p>	<p>Braun RN (1986) Lehrbuch der Allgemeinmedizin - Theorie, Fachsprache und Praxis. Kirchheim, Mainz</p> <p>Braun RN, Fink W, Kamenski G (2007) Lehrbuch der Allgemeinmedizin - Theorie, Fachsprache und Praxis. Berger, Horn</p> <p>Aitken Ashley M, Braun Robert N, Fraillon JMG (1985) UNDERSTANDING GENERAL PRACTICE. Printed by The Victorian Academy for General Practice (conducted under the aegis of The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners – Victorian Faculty)</p> <p>Textbook on general practice – Theory, concepts and practice.</p> <p>A condensed version of Braun's first textbook, explanations of the basics of general practice and the new technical terms; the new edition provides further practice-morbidity studies and gives an overview of frequencies of health disturbances seen in practice within four decades.</p> 
<p>New terms, new concepts for the new discipline</p>		
<p>Braun RN (1945/46) Kritik am Arztum und dessen Reform. Unveröffentlichte Monographie</p> <p>Critique on the medical profession and its reform. Unpublished monography.</p> <p>After only a few years in clinical medicine, Braun provides a critical analysis of his own work in practice and of the medical profession in general. The issues raised here will determine his future research in general practice and will be his lifelong concern.</p> 	<p>Braun RN (1988) Wissenschaftliches Arbeiten in der Allgemeinmedizin. Einführung in die eigenständige Forschungsmethode. Einführung in die eigenständige Forschungsmethode. Springer, Berlin Heidelberg New York London Paris Tokio</p> <p>Research in Primary care. Introduction to its particular research method.</p> <p>Braun explains what is meant by research in the theoretical basis of the profession of general practice, namely "logically and epidemiologically to analyze applied medicine": a large chapter on recording illnesses and its pitfalls, pilot studies and suggestions for research, such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - looking at the various diagnostic approaches, - developing and evaluating diagnostic checklists, - time and motion studies, - significance of <i>watchful waiting</i>, of <i>potentially serious developments</i> in diagnostic reasoning, - reasons for encounter, - research on signs and symptoms, - psychological aspects etc. 	<p>Braun RN, Fink W, Kamenski G (2004) Angewandte Medizin – Wissenschaftliche Grundlagen. Facultas, Wien</p> <p>Applied medicine – scientific foundations.</p> <p>Looking back at 50 years of research in general practice, there is the attempt to establish a scientific basis for day to day practice in family medicine and eventually in other medical disciplines too: "<i>in future applied medicine can and must be researched on and taught in addition to traditional textbook knowledge on diseases</i>".</p> 
<p>Basic knowledge, scientific foundations for research in applied medicine</p>		

<p>Braun,RN (1961) Feinstruktur einer Allgemeinpraxis. Diagnostische und statistische Ergebnisse. Schattauer, Stuttgart</p> <p>Microstructure of a primary care practice. Diagnostic and statistical results.</p> <p>Frequency ranking and description of 306 cases/episodes or <i>results of consultation</i>, as Braun calls them from now on, in contrast to <i>reasons for consultation</i>.</p> <p>He calls for a clear distinction between accurate, definite diagnosis and a “classification” for diagnostically open cases.</p> <p>New terms are introduced: <i>watchful waiting (abwartend offenlassen)</i>, potentially/avoidably life-threatening, dangerous developments (<i>Abwendbar gefährliche Verläufe</i>).</p> 	<p>Braun,RN (1957) Die gezielte Diagnostik in der Praxis. Grundlagen und Krankheitshäufigkeit. Schattauer, Stuttgart</p> <p>The specific diagnostic approach in general practice. Basics and illness frequencies.</p> <p>Difficulties of morbidity studies, categorization of the cases of illness, comparison of annual frequencies of cases, seen in 7 years of practice, discovery of a “Law of cases distribution” (<i>Fälleverteilungsgesetz</i>), i.e. regular frequencies of occurrence and distribution of illness. Braun explains the importance this has for establishing general practice/family medicine as an own discipline.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Conclusion</p> <p>Braun’s scientific work blends in to the topics discussed for a research agenda. For long periods of time Braun was a lone player in the field of primary care research and worldwide not known well enough. We find it worth exploring his legacy.</p>	
<p>Practice-based epidemiology</p>			