

# Clauberg's Eponym and Crimes against Humanity

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**ABSTRACT:** Scientific journals are ethically bound to cite Professor Dr. Carl Clauberg's Nazi medical crimes against humanity whenever the eponym Clauberg is used. Modern articles still publish the eponym citing only the rabbit bioassay used in developing progesterone agonists or antagonists for birth control. Clauberg's Nazi career is traced to his having subjected thousands of Jewish women at the Ravensbruck and Auschwitz-Birkenau death camps to cruel, murderous sterilization experiments that are enthusiastically described by incriminating letters (reproduced here) between him and the notorious Nazi Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler. The experiments were carried out in women's block 10 in Auschwitz-Birkenau where Clauberg's colleague Dr. Josef Mengele worked alongside. After Germany lost World War II in 1945 Mengele fled to South America, where he lived to an old age. Clauberg was caught by Russian soldiers, put on trial in the Soviet Union for his crimes against humanity, and imprisoned in 1948. In 1955 he was repatriated to Germany, once again imprisoned for his crimes, and belatedly expelled from the German Medical Association. To estimate the contemporary usage of the names Mengele and Clauberg, Internet hits were recorded for Clauberg C or Mengele J (with and without adding the term Auschwitz) with the Google and Scirus search engines. The ratios of hits for combinations of these terms reveal that relative to Mengele, Clauberg's name is barely known. We propose that journals and books printing the eponym Clauberg cite its derivation and reference to the convicted Nazi criminal. The present article can serve for such citations.

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**KEY WORDS:** ethics, sterilizations, human experimentation, war crimes, concentration camp, Holocaust

The 1946 Nazi doctors trial in Nuremberg revealed to the world the evil medical crimes against humanity committed by physicians on death camp victims [1]. At first debated, it became accepted that ethics forbid using data derived from the egregious Nazi medical experiments [2]. However, the world's medical community was also confronted with a significant number of classical medical conditions and methods that had acquired eponyms bearing the names of their Nazi

discoverers. The eponym issue is less settled because the names had become part of medical literature [3-6].

In 2007, Strous and Edelman [3] argued that eradicating Nazi doctor eponyms has become critical. They conceded that there might be arguments for preserving Nazi doctor eponyms in order to keep alive the memory of criminal medical behavior. Physicians need reminding how a few can darken their profession by monstrously betraying medical ethics. Moreover, shockingly inhumane Nazi medical experiments associated with the perpetrators' eponyms can help remind students of lessons taught in medical ethics classes long after the classes have ended. Nevertheless, it was proposed [3]:

... The aim is to provide alternative medical nomenclature, as well as examples of other eponyms named for individuals who were victims of the Nazi era, eponyms of those who protested such injustices at the time, and eponyms of those who had to flee imminent discrimination and even death. These should be remembered and strengthened, as opposed to those of the perpetrators which should be obliterated.

In all, 13 eponyms are listed for deletion to be replaced by medical terms or the names of prominent victims of Nazism. In 2008, Keynan and Rimar [4] similarly proposed changing Reiter's syndrome to reactive arthritis [5]. Both articles provide biographical sketches of the Nazi doctors, summarizing their egregious acts, proposing to replace Nazi doctor eponyms with more appropriate names or descriptive medical terms [3-6]. However, Carl Clauberg's name does not appear on the lists.

The infamous Dr. Josef Mengele heads any list of the worst Nazi medical doctors. He had performed cruel and murderous experiments on Jewish children at Auschwitz-Birkenau while also vigorously facilitating the Nazi's "final solution to the Jewish question" by personally selecting victims for gassing [1,7-9]. Mengele's medical co-worker, the gynecologist with whom he shared the building called women's Block 10 in the death camp, was the equally murderous Professor Dr. Carl Clauberg. But unlike Mengele who fled to South America as World War II ended, Clauberg was arrested, put on trial, convicted, and then imprisoned for his crimes [1,10-16]. Thus, even though Clauberg was proven to be a Nazi criminal, the eponym bearing his name is still printed in modern research publications and reference books [17,18] without referring to his medical crimes against humanity.

The present article traces Clauberg's academic obstetrics and gynecology career as well as his rise in the Nazi Party that led to his crimes against Jewish women and humanity. Included are originally secret incriminating correspondence between Clauberg and Nazi Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler. The information presented here is to remind authors and editors using the Clauberg eponym that for ethical reasons a footnote citing this man's crimes against humanity should be inserted.

#### CLAUBERG'S BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH [1,11-16]

Carl Clauberg was born on 28 September 1898 to a family of metal craftsmen in the village of Wupperhof near Solingen, Germany. His father made knives and had been an arms dealer as well. Carl served with the Prussian infantry in France during World War I (1916–1918). In November 1917 he was taken prisoner of war by the British army. Clauberg was released in September 1919 and afterwards studied medicine at the universities of Kiel, Hamburg and Graz until 1925.

After passing his state medical examination in 1924, Clauberg trained as a *Medizinalpraktikant* at the Institute for Forensic and Social Medicine of the University of Kiel until 31 January 1925. He was also trained at the city hospital in Kiel until March 1925. Clauberg became a licensed physician on 6 April 1925, and on 1 May 1925 was conferred doctor of medicine at the University of Kiel. From 1 November 1925 through 30 June 1932 he was an assistant physician, then named physician at the University Women's Clinic (*Universitätsfrauenklinik*) in Kiel. During this period, he had carried out the now classical reproductive endocrine research, establishing himself as a significant academic gynecologist [19]. From 1 August 1932 Clauberg practiced gynecology at the *Frauenklinik* in Königsberg.

On 2 February 1933 Clauberg was reappointed physician to the staff of the University Women's Clinic in Königsberg, and two months later he joined the NSDAP (the Nazi party), named *SA-Sanitätssturmführer* later that year. The next year, as head physician he continued publishing articles on female reproductive endocrinology that attracted international attention. Clauberg was named *außerplanmäßiger* Professor on 30 August 1937 and installed as chief physician as *SA-Standarte* (i.e., *SA-Gruppe Ostland*), then as *SA-Sanitäts-Obersturmführer* on 9 November 1937.

Elevated to "professor extraordinary for gynaecology and obstetrics" at the University of Königsberg in 1938, the next year Clauberg was appointed *außerplanmäßiger Professor*. From 2 February 1940 through 11 January 1945, he was director and physician-in-chief at the women's clinic of the *Knappschafts*, and at the

St. Hedwig-Krankenhauses Königshütte in Upper Silesia. Under cover of World War II, Clauberg led a gynecologic research team at the Ravensbruck, then at the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camps. His research had been commissioned by Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler (Adolf Hitler's second in command) to develop rapid, inexpensive, and efficient methods for sterilizing Jewish women by the thousands per day.

### Carl Clauberg carried out deadly sterilization experiments on thousands of Jewish women at Auschwitz women's Block 10 called "Clauberg's block" that he shared with Josef Mengele

#### CLAUBERG'S CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES 1940–1945 [10-16,20-22]

By 1940, Clauberg had been a member of Germany's Nazi Party for seven years. He was in regular contact with Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler for planning experiments to develop inexpensive mass sterilization methods on Jewish women. Efficient mass sterilization was intended for managing the Third Reich's anticipated slave labor from Jewish populations in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union after Nazi Germany had conquered those regions.

At a secret conference on 7 July 1942, Himmler charged Clauberg, Professor Karl Gebhardt, and Richard Glücks (the inspector of concentration camps) with the responsibility of developing the most cost-effective method for sterilizing millions of Jewish women in the shortest possible time.

#### MEMORANDUM OF OBERSTURMBANNFUEHRER-SS BRANDT ON DISCUSSION BETWEEN HIMMLER, GEBHART, GLUECKS, AND CLAUBERG CONCERNING STERILIZATION EXPERIMENTS CONDUCTED ON JEWESSES [TOWC, VOL. I, P. 728] FUEHRER HEADQUARTERS, JULY 1942 [20]

On 7 July 1942, a discussion took place between the Reich Leader-SS, Brigadefuehrer-SS Professor Dr. Gebhart, Brigadefuehrer-SS Gluecks, and Brigadefuehrer-SS Clauberg, Koenigshette. The topic of the discussion was the sterilization of Jewesses. The Reich Leader-SS has promised Brigadefuehrer Professor Clauberg that Auschwitz concentration camp will be at his disposal for his experiments on human beings and animals. By means of some fundamental experiments, a method should be found which would lead to sterilization of persons without their knowledge. The Reich Leader-SS wanted to get another report as soon as the result of these experiments was known, so that the sterilization of Jewesses could then be carried out in actuality.

It should also be examined, preferably in cooperation with Professor Dr. Hohlfelder, an X-ray specialist in Germany, what way sterilization of men could be achieved by X-ray treatment.

The Reich Leader-SS called the special attention of all gentlemen present to the fact that the matter involved was most secret and should be discussed only with the officers in charge and that the persons present at the experiments had to pledge secrecy.

### Strous and Edelman argue " ... when an issue of ethics is involved, changing or eradicating such eponyms becomes critical"

**LETTER FROM PROFESSOR CLAUBERG TO HIMMLER, 7 JUNE 1943, ON HIS RESEARCH CONCERNING STERILIZATION OF WOMEN [TO WC, VOL 1, P. 730] [20]**

Dear Reich Leader,

Today I am fulfilling my obligation to report to you from time to time about the state of my research work.

The method I contrived to achieve the sterilization of the female organism without operation is as good as perfected. It can be performed by a single injection made through the entrance of the uterus in the course of the customary gynecological examination known to every physician. If I say that the method is "as good as perfected" this means:

1. Still to be worked out are only minor improvements of the method.
2. Already today it could be put to practical use in the course of our regu-

lar eugenic sterilization and could thus replace the operation. As to the question which you, Reich Leader, asked me almost one year ago, i.e., how much time would probably be required to sterilize 1,000 women by using this method. Today, I can answer you with regard to the future as follows: If my researches continue to have the same results as up to now – and there is no reason to doubt that – then the moment is not far off when I can say: "One adequately trained physician in one adequately equipped place, with perhaps 10 assistants (the number of assistants in conformity with the speed desired) will most likely be able to deal with several hundred, if not even 1,000 per day"

Thousands of Jewish and Roma women had been sterilized by injections producing terrible pain, inflamed ovaries, bursting spasms in the stomach, and bleeding. The injections seriously damaged the ovaries of the victims, which were then removed and sent to Berlin. Clauberg's experiments killed most of his subjects while others had been casually put to death simply so that autopsies could be performed [1].

**CLAUBERG JAILED IN 1948 AND AGAIN IN 1955**

In January 1945 the Soviet army advanced westward into Poland towards Auschwitz. Clauberg fled west to the Ravensbruck concentration camp inside Germany where he continued his sterilization experiments. When the war ended, Clauberg tried to escape to Schleswig-Holstein. But on 8 June 1945 he was taken prisoner by Soviet soldiers who sent him to the USSR to stand trial for his crimes. In 1948 Clauberg was convicted of crimes against humanity and he began serving a 25 year sentence in a Soviet prison [1].

On 11 October 1955, after the Adenauer-Bulgananin prisoner exchange agreement had been signed between the USSR and Germany [21], Clauberg was freed, having served only 7 of his 25 year term. He returned to West Germany where during newspaper and television interviews the repatriated Nazi criminal boasted about his medical accomplishments, emphasizing

the importance of his gynecologic research on "birth control." However, after being seen on German television by concentration camp survivors, Clauberg was once again accused of medical crimes, this time by the Central Board of German Jews (*Zentralrat der Deutschen Juden*). The following account is taken from *Time* magazine issued 5 December 1955 [22]:

Watching on television the first 600 German prisoners returning from the Soviet Union, Hendrik van Dam, Secretary-General of the Central Board of German Jews, saw a lined, familiar face show up on the screen. A few minutes later his phone rang, and an excited voice shouted: "Did you see the pig?" The face van Dam and many others had cause to remember belonged to Nazi Gynecologist Carl Clauberg, an SS general and one-time chief of the infamous Block Ten

medical section at Auschwitz concentration camp, where he carried out brutal sterilization experiments on Jewish women, killing many of them.

**Clauberg's imprisonment for medical crimes against humanity must be disclosed whenever the test bearing his name appears in modern biomedical journals and books**

Carefully sifting his evidence against Clauberg, van Dam, a lawyer, decided that it was too difficult to get the Nazi doctor convicted of murder under German law. Instead, he preferred that the gynecologist be convicted for the much easier to prove crime of premeditated bodily harm. Van Dam brought his evidence to the public prosecutor at Kiel, claiming that Clauberg had intentionally "caused severe bodily harm" to large numbers of Jewish women at Ravensbruck and Auschwitz. He submitted more than 30 sworn statements signed by sterilized, permanently injured Jewish women who had survived Clauberg's experiments in Block 10.

An arrest warrant issued for Clauberg on 21 November 1955 charged him with "causing severe bodily harm." The Kiel police took him to prison to await his trial. Said Hendrik van Dam [20]:

It does not matter whether this pathetic creature goes to jail for 15 years or one year or one day. It is history that matters. Many people, dismissing Nürnberg as a 'victor's vengeance' are skeptical of Nürnberg evidence. We mean to show that this man is guilty not under the victor's law but under German law.

At long last, the German Medical Association expelled Clauberg in 1956, and he died in prison of a heart attack on 9 August 1957 while awaiting trial in Kiel [1,10,11].

Meanwhile, medical researchers kept referring to Clauberg's pre-1940 work. Clauberg's classic methodology [19] led to the eponym, still used in modern publications [17,18]. Yet since 1945, not a single scientific publication printing his eponym cites Clauberg's cruel sterilization experiments at Ravensbruck and Auschwitz that resulted in the deaths of thousands of sacrificial Jewish and Roma women between 1942 and 1945.

**CLAUBERG VERSUS MENGELE**

An underlying supposition in this article is that while the name Mengele is widely recognized today, Clauberg’s is virtually unknown outside of relatively narrow scientific, medical and history circles. To test this assumption, search engines were used to surf the Internet to determine the numbers of sites and frequency that each of the names are recorded. Both general and science-oriented search engines were used. Google [Table 1] searches for keywords over a broad range of the Internet. “Mengele” collected over two million hits, 23 times the number returned searching for “Clauberg” [Table 1]. The science-oriented search engine Scirus separates hits into four major categories [Table 2]: Total hits (analogous to Google), Journal sources (mainly scientific publications), Preferred Web (less specialized than science), and Other Web (hits left over).

The results shown in Tables 2 were obtained from searching the Internet with Scirus for combinations of the key words:

**Table 1.** Internet hits for key words associated with Nazi doctors of Auschwitz-Birkenau\*

Key word combinations	Number of hits	Ratios
1. Mengele	2,370,000	
2. Josef Mengele	674,000	
3. Clauberg	91,200	1:3 = 26:1
4. Carl Clauberg	40,900	2:4 = 17:1
5. Clauberg + Mengele	7590	
6. Auschwitz + Mengele	578,000	
7. Auschwitz + Clauberg	28,400	6:7 = 21:1

\*Google search engine, 17 March 2011

**Table 2a.** Scirus scientific search engine\*

Key word combinations	Total hits	Journal sources	Preferred Web	Other Web
1. Mengele J	3664	314	268	3082
2. Mengele + Auschwitz	3012	71	85	2856
3. Clauberg C	2755	923	611	1221
4. Clauberg + Auschwitz	128	8	7	115
5. Clauberg-McPhail	115	27	22	66

\*Search carried out on 8 March 2011

**Table 2b.** Ratios of hit results from Table 2a

Key words combinations	Ratio Total hits	Ratio Journal sources	Ratio Preferred Web	Ratio Other Web
1. Mengele J: Clauberg C	1.3:1	0.34:1	0.44:1	2.5:1
2. Mengele + Auschwitz: Clauberg + Auschwitz	23.5:1	8.9:1	12:1	24.8:1
3. Clauberg C: Clauberg-McPhail	24:1	34.2:1	27.8:1	18.5:1

“Mengele J,” “Clauberg C,” and “Auschwitz.” Within the scientific literature, Clauberg occurs with 2.9 times the frequency that of Mengele. Most likely this reflects the fact that since the early 1930s Clauberg had published a series of classic biomedical articles, while Holocaust scholars writing about his crimes mainly cited Mengele’s name. Meanwhile, although both Clauberg and Clauberg-McPhail are interchangeably used in scientific literature, Clauberg alone is cited 34.2:1 [Table 2b]. Probably Clauberg’s series of pre-1940 articles is much more widely referenced, resulting in the Clauberg eponym being more prevalent than Clauberg-McPhail because McPhail’s work arrived later on the scientific scene.

The frequency of Mengele versus Clauberg is reversed when it comes to a broader Internet search. Thus, while overall the ratio of hits for Mengele J:Clauberg C is 1.3:1 [Table 2b], the ratio of key word combinations Mengele + Auschwitz: Clauberg + Auschwitz is 23.5:1. No doubt, the 18-fold difference between the two ratios can be accounted for by Mengele’s name being associated with his high profile as the most notorious “Angel of Death” at Auschwitz even though Clauberg had probably carried out many more cruel and deadly human experiments in Block 10 than Mengele did during the same period.

Aside from the obvious reasons for Clauberg being referred to mostly in the science area, clearly Mengele, whose name is virtually synonymous with the Holocaust, eclipses the gynecologist’s notoriety as an Angel of Death. The mass sterilization experiments on women were the highest priority research at Auschwitz for Himmler, second in command of Nazi Germany. Between 1942 and 1945, Mengele had much more visibility than Clauberg because he supervised selections at Auschwitz-Birkenau. However, the types and numbers of murderous experiments by Clauberg numerically exceeded those by Mengele. For these reasons, Clauberg’s name needs to be placed next to Mengele’s in its rightful place in infamy.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The eponym Clauberg refers to the classical bioassay for the effects of progesterone on the immature estrogen-primed rabbit uterus. The crimes committed by Carl Clauberg at the Ravensbruck and Auschwitz-Birkenau death camps are analogously associated with his experiments on thousands of Jewish women. Clauberg was convicted in a courtroom of crimes against humanity and was later imprisoned by a German prosecutor for “causing severe bodily harm.” His name surely belongs alongside that of Josef Mengele.

Furthermore, modern ethical scientific and medical standards require that whenever an article is published containing the Clauberg eponym and methods associated with it, the perpetrator’s crimes should be explicitly disclosed. Such disclosures must be included in biomedical journals so that future generations will know that Carl Clauberg was convicted

of crimes against humanity for his large-scale perversion of science and medicine in Nazi death camps.

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**Capsule**

**Mutations in the gene *CIB2* contribute to Usher syndrome and non-syndromic deafness**

Individuals with the hereditary disorder Usher syndrome suffer from hearing loss. Associated genetic mutations impair function of the inner ear, where sensory cells fail to convert sound waves into electrical signals. Riazuddin and co-authors have determined that mutations in the gene *CIB2* contribute to Usher syndrome and non-syndromic deafness. *CIB2* encodes calcium and integrin binding protein 2, which is widely expressed in human and mouse tissue. In the mouse inner ear, the protein localizes to the tips of stereocilia of inner ear cells. When deflected by sound waves, ion channels in these hair-like projections open, triggering a mechano-electrical signaling cascade. *CIB2*

interacts with whirlin, a protein that organizes molecular complexes which maintain stereocilia structure and growth. Suppression of *CIB2* expression in zebrafish disrupted responses to acoustic stimuli and caused abnormal balance during movement. Overexpression of *CIB2* in cultured cells decreased the release of calcium from intracellular stores. *CIB2* may help to maintain intracellular calcium homeostasis in inner ear cells by sequestering calcium and influencing the release of stored calcium during mechano-electrical signal transduction.

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