

HISTORY IN MEDICINE

‘Tu Souffres, Cela Suffit’: Louis Pasteur’s (1822–1895) inspirational motto for Sydney’s St George HospitalNadeem Toodayan¹, Zaheer Toodayan² and Marika Sablatura-Nagi³¹Independent Scholar, and ²Nuclear Medicine Department, and ³Library Information Services, St George Hospital, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia**Key words**

Tu Souffres Cela Suffit, St George Hospital
Motto, Louis Pasteur (1822–1895), Adrien Loir
(1862–1941), Vaccination, History of Medicine.

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Received 5 March 2023; accepted
29 March 2023.

Abstract

In the fiscal year of 1960–1961, board members of Sydney’s St George Hospital elected to adopt a new motto for the organisation: ‘Tu souffres, cela suffit’ – French for ‘You are suffering, that is enough’. Today these words are all too familiar to staff members and visitors to St George Hospital, but few are aware of their actual historical significance. Accessible histories of the hospital attribute the motto to the distinguished French microbiologist Louis Pasteur (1822–1895), but the original context of Pasteur’s remark is not commonly stated. We set out to record the exact source and history of the hospital’s motto alongside its logo, referencing in passing, Louis Pasteur’s outstanding legacy to Australian medicine in this bicentenary year of his birth.

Symbolic representations of cultural identity are ubiquitous in the medical profession. All medical colleges, professional societies and hospitals have specially designed insignia and designated mottos that encapsulate core organisational values and precepts. Some have fascinating historical associations. As a case in point, we studied the logo of St George Hospital in Sydney, which incorporates a classical Campbellian hero’s journey and the stated ideals of modern microbiology’s legendary French progenitor, Louis Pasteur (1822–1895), whose bicentenary is this year. Together, the hospital’s chosen logo and motto preserve the aspirational outlook of former staff members and the humanist ethos of late 19th-century scientific medicine.

The St George Hospital

Staff members and visitors to Sydney’s St George Hospital will be all too familiar with the hospital’s circular emblem – a bordered red orb featuring the hospital’s name, a line figure of its historical namesake and the otherwise unrelated French words ‘Tu Souffres, Cela Suffit’. Various sizes of the logo are on display in the main foyer, throughout the wards and clinics, in

amphitheatres and high above the older Tower Ward Block of the hospital where it can be seen at a distance by Sydney’s citizens and curious passers by (Fig. 1). To appreciate the significance of the symbols and sayings used, it is necessary to delve into the earlier history of the hospital.

Plans to erect a new hospital in Kogarah to meet local conditions were formally officiated in May of 1892, after the tragic fire deaths of a severely burned local widow and her toddler on route to the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital.¹ The two were retrieved from their burnt Arncliffe home, which was set ablaze after the widow’s 10-year-old daughter accidentally self-immolated her nightgown by knocking over a kerosene lamp in the outhouse overnight. Community uproar in the aftermath of this horrific event pressured selected officials to meet on 17 June 1892 at the Kogarah School of Arts to discuss the establishment of a new hospital. It was at this meeting that the would-be hospital was first named The St George’s Cottage Hospital.² The title was derived from the earlier established district name of St George (a historical Parish in Cumberland County, New South Wales) and referenced the reputation of one of England’s leading medical institutions – St George’s Hospital in Tooting, London (est. 1733). The hospital’s foundation stone was laid on 19 May 1894 and the building became fully operational on 16 November of the same year.³

Funding: None.

Conflict of interest: None.



Figure 1 A detailed solid engraving of St George Hospital's logo is on display above the older Tower Ward Block, which was opened in 1972. The more simplified line etching (here pictured in the grand rounds amphitheatre) is used everywhere else. Photographs taken in December 2022 by Zaheer Toodayan.

Logo and motto

Beyond its original name, the St George Hospital does not appear to have adopted a special seal or slogan to distinguish itself formally from other health services in the vicinity during its formative years. It is not known exactly when the hospital first decided to use an official emblem, but a review of historical administrative records shows the logos that were formerly in use before the present one was definitively adopted in the fiscal year of 1961 (Fig. 2). It would appear that the move to officiate the hospital's logo and motto mirrored efforts to consolidate the organisation's 'district' to 'teaching' hospital status in the early 1960s.

As with other institutions linked to the name of St George, the hospital adopted the familiar figure of England's patron saint slaying a dragon on horseback. Saint George of Lydda (d. 303) was a Greco-Roman imperial cavalryman and early martyr of Christianity who served as a member of Diocletian's praetorian guard.⁴ According to 13th-century mediaeval legend, he was responsible for slaying a dragon 'whyche envenymed alle the contre'⁵ and extorted citizens in the mythical city of Silene in Libya. After exhausting the city's supply of sacrificial sheep and other offerings, a lottery was instituted by the King to deliver a child or young adult to the dragon to appease it and prevent its encroaching on the city. Much to the King's regret, his own daughter was eventually drawn for the annual sacrifice and his subjects insisted that

the ballot be honoured. Saint George chanced upon the Princess at the sacrificial pond, where he speared and subdued the dragon as it mounted its attack. The dragon was later slayed before the King, who erected

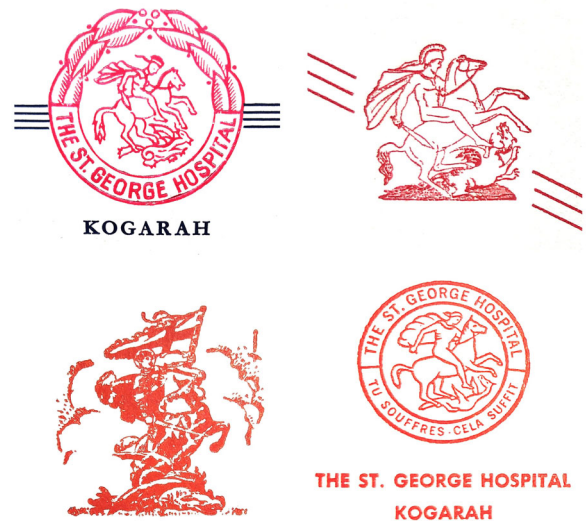


Figure 2 Historical logos of the St George Hospital as shown on original printed *Annual Reports* from 1949 (upper left), 1957 (upper right), 1959 (bottom left) and finally 1961 (bottom right), showing the addition of Pasteur's motto. Reports provided by St George Hospital Librarian Marika Sablatura-Nagy.

a church at the same site ‘in the whiche yet sourdeth a founteyn of lvyng water whiche heleth seek peple that drynke therof’.⁶

The origins of the hospital’s motto are rather more definitive. Led by St George’s then Chief Executive Officer, Thomas Arthur Clark Griffith (1917–1985),⁷ a petition was made in the second half of the year of 1960 for a new motto to be adopted by the hospital ‘with the aims of epitomising its ideal of patient care and providing an inspiration to all who served it’.⁸ The outcomes of the appeal are shared in the *Sixty-Ninth Annual Report* of the St George Hospital (June 1961), one of the first official articles to be imprinted with the new logo and motto:

‘Some months ago the Board thought that a motto should be adopted by the hospital... Many suggestions were considered, in several languages, but the final choice was the above words of Louis Pasteur, the great French scientist and humanitarian of the last century. Pasteur laboured for neither reward nor honour, but for the sole satisfaction of helping his fellow man. In troublous (sic) times in France when his work was being discouraged, he stated, “One does not ask a sick person from what country or of what religion are you. You are sick – that is enough. Put yourself in my care and I will treat you.” Thus came the motto of St George Hospital “Tu souffres – cela suffit.” “You are sick – that is enough.”⁸

It is not known who originally suggested the motto, although one of the state’s best known clinician historians, Dr Benedetto Haneman (1923–2001), was well established at St George Hospital at this time.⁹ The motto was swiftly added to staff name badges in 1961 and has become a staple of the hospital’s professional identity ever since.

‘Tu Souffres, Cela Suffit’

The St George Hospital *Annual Report* for 1961 does not provide an original reference for Pasteur’s purported statement and the exact origins of the quote have frequently been omitted in standard historical commentaries on the hospital.^{7,10} References to an English translation of the quote in René Dubos’ (1901–1982) 1950 biography of Pasteur¹¹ were noted in 2012,¹² but Dubos does not provide the specific source of the quotation either.

It is well known to Pasteurian scholars that Pasteur’s scientific and literary works were formally collated and reprinted by his grandson Louis Pasteur Vallery-Radot (1886–1970) in his seven-volume *Oeuvres de Pasteur* which was published between the years 1922 and 1939.^{13–19} The final volume of this work is devoted to

Mélanges Scientifiques Et Littéraires, and includes the original essay from which Pasteur’s chosen quotation is taken. The title to the relevant address gives the exact date and place of Pasteur’s proclamation, and the text critically details the original context of the oft-quoted apophthegm.

On Tuesday, 8 June 1886, Louis Pasteur (Fig. 3) addressed members of Paris’ Philanthropic Society (est. 1780) at the opening of its new maternal asylum,²⁰ the *Maison Georgina Roze*.²¹ He began by apologising for declining the presidency of the group because ‘every half-day spent outside the laboratory seems to me a wasted day full of remorse’²⁰ but commended the Society for its various philanthropic services to Parisians in need for well over a century. He was particularly supportive of the new asylum’s stated goal ‘of protecting the mother and to prevent a little being from beginning life with suffering and misery’,²⁰ stating in turn that ‘I could well refuse to be president, but I could not refuse to be godfather’.²⁰



Figure 3 Louis Pasteur in 1886 (from the frontispiece of Vallery-Radot’s *Life of Pasteur*), the same year he stated the future motto of Sydney’s St George Hospital.

Pasteur praised the Society's members for their steadfastness in their charity to the poor and vulnerable, even in the face of hostility. He had nothing but encouraging remarks for his inspiring audience that Tuesday:

'You began, a hundred years ago, by taking care of octogenarians, then, after having adopted the old man, fed the poor, sheltered the woman who is afraid of isolation and of the night, you now open an asylum for newborn babies. Ah! Gentlemen, you have solved, down to the last detail, one of the most difficult problems in the world: to do good... And, as we walk along this path, we are carried along by goodness itself. There are no more barriers or borders. We do what you do. We do not ask an unfortunate person: what is your country or what is your religion? We say to him: You are suffering; that is enough; you belong to me, and I will relieve you!'²⁰

Tu souffres, cela suffit; tu m'appartiens, et je te soulagerai!
How often these few words have resonated with philanthropic minds. Even now, 200 years after Pasteur's birth, they strike at the heart of contemporary health care, embodying a core Hippocratic ideal of professional medical practice.

Legacy

Louis Pasteur is well known worldwide for his revolutionary contributions to medicine. Over the course of a stellar scientific career, he famously demonstrated the microbiological basis for fermentation (and its prevention by Pasteurisation), refuted the theory of spontaneous generation and scientifically substantiated the germ theory of disease. These works directly led to the development of vaccination and the adoption of antisepsis in surgical theatres.²² 'For this achievement if for nothing else', William Osler (1849–1919) remarked, 'the (name) of Louis Pasteur... will go down to posterity among those of the greatest benefactors of humanity'.²³

It was Pasteur who first invented the 'attenuated' vaccine in 1879 when he discovered that the reduced pathogenicity of 'atmospherically attenuated' fowl cholera (*Pasteurella multocida*) cultures did not compromise their immunogenicity.²⁴ He thus produced effective artificial vaccines for fowl cholera, anthrax and most famously rabies, declaring that it would one day be possible 'to culture all microbes and to find a vaccine for all infectious diseases'.²⁵ Pasteur's nephew-in-law Adrien Loir (1862–1941) applied these same techniques in Australia



Figure 4 Sydney's historical Rodd Island, where Adrien Loir lived and worked for many months undertaking experiments to test Pasteur's biological control remedy (fowl cholera) for the *Royal Intercolonial Rabbit Commission* (1888). Loir later turned the island laboratory into the *Pasteur Institute of Australia* (closed 1898) for the local production of anthrax and other livestock vaccines. His original residence remains intact (centre), but the government laboratory and associated buildings were demolished before the island became a recreational reserve in 1894. The island's land area was expanded to almost twice its original size after 1900 to extend its western border (see gazebo and boat). Photograph taken with permission in December 2022 by Zaheer Toodayan.



Figure 5 One of Adrien Loir’s scrapbooks showing an early photograph of Sydney’s Royal Botanical Gardens and editorials from local newspapers on the progress of his researches into anthrax and Pasteur’s biological control remedy (fowl cholera) for Australia’s intractable rabbit plague problem. The engraving is a self-portrait of Loir working in the laboratory at Rodd Island. Courtesy of the Australian Academy of Science.

when he visited the country in 1888 through 1891 to work at a temporary research laboratory on Sydney’s Rodd Island (Fig. 4).²⁶ Sales of Pasteur’s anthrax vaccine to Australian farmers provided crucial funding for the establishment of the *Pasteur Institute* in Paris, where Louis Pasteur was himself buried after his death on 28 September 1895. The full saga of Pasteur’s historical dealings in Australia are intriguingly told by Stephen Dando-Collins in his gripping 2008 nonfiction paperback *Pasteur’s Gambit*.²⁷ Other important Australian resources on the subject include three detailed historical articles written by the Melbourne microbiologist Phyllis Rountree (1911–1994) in 1983,^{28–30} Jean Chaussivert and Maurice Blackman’s 1987 monograph on *Louis Pasteur and the Pasteur Institute in Australia*,³¹ and Frank Fenner’s (1914–2010) scholarly 1990 review of the *History of Microbiology in Australia*.³²

In 1978, Frank Fenner and others helped to arrange an Australian lectureship tour for Adrien Loir’s daughter, Marie-Louise Hemphill (1908–2002), so that she could retell her father’s story to Australian

audiences.³³ She brought with her two very special travel scrapbook diaries that had been collated by her father during his working visits to Queensland and New South Wales in the late 19th century. These remarkable relics of Adrien Loir’s time in Australia were gifted by Dr Hemphill to the *Australian Academy of Science* on 1 May 1978, immediately after a lecture about Pasteur’s and Loir’s important contributions to Australian microbiology (Fig. 5). After three weeks, Dr Hemphill lectured on the same subject to Sydney’s Royal Australasian College of Physicians, wherein she summarised her father’s work in Australia, and noted how her great uncle had ‘devoted his life to science for the welfare of mankind’.³⁴

Conclusion

There can be no doubt that Louis Pasteur’s and his colleagues’ scientific contributions revolutionised medical and veterinary science in Australia. But it was Pasteur’s humanism that appealed to the minds of former staff

members at Sydney's St George Hospital when they set out to adopt a suitable motto for their historical institution. Aiming for an axiom that would inspire and endure, they looked to the life of the good French microbiologist, who – like the *Gentleman Knight of Cappadocia** – placed the relief of human suffering at the nucleus of patient care.

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* This is how St George introduces himself to the Roman authorities: "I am named George, I am a gentyl man a knyght of capadoce." See: Voragine J. Here followeth the lyf of Saynt George martyr. In: Voragine J and Caxton W, eds. *The Golden Legende. Englished by William Caxton*. Westminster: William Caxton, 1483, Folio C lvii. Ellis' modernised version reads: "I am named George, I am a gentleman, a knight of Cappadocia."³⁵

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