

Letter to the Editor

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We would like to clarify a commonly misunderstood term (torcular Herophili) that has infiltrated all fields associated with neuroanatomy e.g. neurosurgery, neurology, neurosciences. The term torcular (wine press) is an incorrect version of the original Greek word (a canal or gutter) [1]. Herophili is after the celebrated Greek physician/anatomist Herophilus (335 B.C.-280 B.C.) born in Chalcedon which is now Kadikoy, Turkey. Herophilus is known as the father of anatomy because he was the first to base his conclusions on dissection of the human body. Herophilus studied the brain, recognizing it as the center of the nervous system. The original term was meant to describe the concavity on the internal aspect of the occipital bone that housed the confluence of sinuses. However, over time this term has been used incorrectly as an interchangeable term with the confluence of sinuses. Almost every textbook of anatomy with few exceptions, that we reviewed, interchange these terms with no distinction [e.g. 2-4]. True these two entities are intimately related but clearly represent different anatomical structures. Just as other venous sinuses erode the inner table of the skull producing same named sulci or grooves e.g. the transverse sinus sulcus, the confluence of sinuses (formed by the superior sagittal, straight, occipital, and transverse sinuses) erode the occipital bone where the major venous sinus tributaries congregate thus forming the torcular Herophili. This original Greek term has been mistranslated as "wine press" thus propagating the idea that this area is where the major venous sinuses (wine) meet (press) in the midline.

Sincerely,

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