

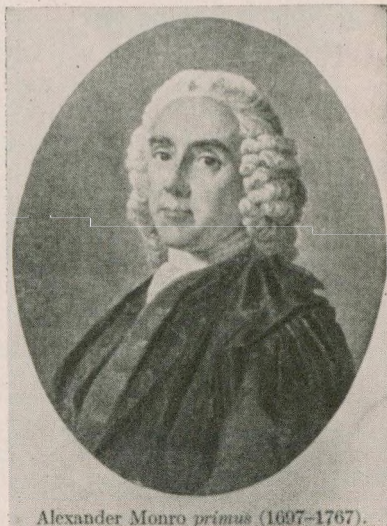


## A Medical Dynasty

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**T**HE celebrated Scottish medical family of Monro held the chair of anatomy at the University of Edinburgh for 3 successive generations and a total of 126 years. Indeed these 3 members of the family were numbered like royalty, and were referred to as Monro primus, Monro secundus, and Monro tertius. All had the same first name, Alexander, and they might well have been designated as Alexander I, II, and III.

The founder of the dynasty was a Scotch army surgeon, John Monro, a man of ability and energy, well worthy of being the progenitor of a distinguished son, grandson, and great-grandson. He was one of the founders of the Medical School of the University of Edinburgh and sent his son, afterward the famous Monro primus, to Leyden where he studied under Boerhaave, and then to London where he worked with Cheselden. He became the first professor of anatomy at the Medical School in 1720, and his handsome person and brilliance as a lecturer and as a demonstrator drew students to the university.



Alexander Monro *primus* (1697-1767).

He taught anatomy for 38 years and was also a clinical teacher of surgery. He was a fine surgeon and had an extensive practice. He was the author of several books and his essay on comparative anatomy published in 1774 was the first work in English to use that term in the title. His book on osteology and the anatomy of the nerves was long used as a text. Born in 1697, he died in 1767.

Alexander Monro, secundus, was an example of a famous son of a famous father. Such pairs are found in the case of David and Solomon, and the elder and younger Pitt. Like his father, Monro secundus

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was a splendid public speaker, and it is stated that 40,000 students attended the lectures of the first two Monros, a very large number for an 18th century medical school even over a long period of years. Born in 1733 he was an active teacher for 50 years. His name has been perpetuated by his discovery of the communication between the lateral and third ventricles of the brain known to every physician as the Foramen of Monro. The first account of this foramen in print was in his book *Observations on the Structure and Functions of the Nervous System* in 1783. Monro secundus also published the first attempt at a description of all the bursae of the human body. He also wrote a work on the structure and physiology of fishes that was based on careful dissection and is considered of value even today. Undoubtedly the greatest of the three Monros, Secundus claimed priority over William Hunter in descriptions of certain features of the lymphatic system. He had a large and lucrative consulting practice.

In 1798, he relinquished the chair of anatomy to his son although he continued to do some teaching in addition to his practice. He died in 1817.

Monroe tertius, also the least of the three, taught until 1836. He lived to a great extent on the reputation of his father and grandfather. He even read the latter's lecture written a hundred years before without change which sometimes produced some incongruous effects. He published several books that were not without merit. The facts are largely taken from previous works on anatomy but they contain many fine plates. One book, *The Outlines of the Human Body in its Sound and Diseased States* was an ingenious combination of anatomy and pathology. Born in 1773, this third Monro died in 1859. The *Lancet* carried the notice in March, 1935 of the death of Dr. G. H. Monro-Home, the great-grandson of Monro tertius, thus bringing this interesting medical family down to our own time from the early 18th century.

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## Overweight More Prevalent Among Men

ALTHOUGH studies by some insurance companies have shown overweight to be more common in women, more recent studies by the Public Health Service indicate that overweight occurs nearly twice as frequently among men in the white population.

—*Patterns of Disease*, Parke, Davis & Co.