

# Michael Skjelderup

*Michael* is a publication series named after professor *Michael Skjelderup* (1769–1852), one of the fathers of Norwegian medicine. He was born in Hof, a small place in what now is called the Vestfold county in Norway as the son of a priest, and was raised in the Norwegian countryside. Because of severe speech disturbances as a boy he did not get proper schooling, but was at last accepted as an apprentice in an apothecary's dispensary in the city of Fredrikstad at the age of 16. During his youth he tried through hard work and by means of an intensive self-discipline to overcome his handicap, and he really succeeded, except for in stressed situations.

Lacking a student examination, an academic training seemed out of question, in spite of his obvious bright mind. However, in 1789 he was admitted to the new Surgical Academy in Copenhagen, where academic qualifications were not required.

From now on, his career flourished. He passed the surgical examination with the highest grade in 1794, entered positions in Copenhagen hospitals and at the University, where he defended his doctoral thesis in 1803 and was appointed professor in 1805.

The first University in Norway was founded in Christiania (now: Oslo) in 1811. Medical teaching was supposed to commence from the very beginning, and from 1814 the new medical faculty could offer medical training. Michael Skjelderup was appointed its first professor 1813, and started his teaching, mainly in anatomy in the fall of 1814, after a dramatic war time sea voyage from Denmark across the waters of Skagerrak where hostile Swedes fired at his swift sailing vessel.

As a University pioneer, he became active in several medical fields. Among other achievements, he published an authoritative textbook in forensic medicine in 1838. When he resigned in 1849, eighty years old, he had seen all Norwegian trained medical doctors in his lecture room.

Skjelderup was instrumental in building a scientific medical community in Christiania. Together with his University colleague Frederik Holst (1791–1871) he founded the first Norwegian medical journal *Eyr*, named after a Norse medical goddess, in 1826. A reading club of physicians established in 1826 was formalized into an association in 1833, the still existing *Det norske medicinske Selskab* (The Norwegian Medical Society), which over the decades to come played an important role in the development of the health services and of a national medicine.

*Michael* is devoted to the memory of the man who first realized the importance of a regular, national medical publication activity in Norway and implemented his ideas in 1826. *Michael* is published by the same association as was founded by Michael Skjelderup and his colleagues – *Det norske medicinske Selskab*.

*The editors*