

The character

Adapted by Ingenio

English version: Beatriz Elena Marín Ochoa

TWELVE IDEAS THAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

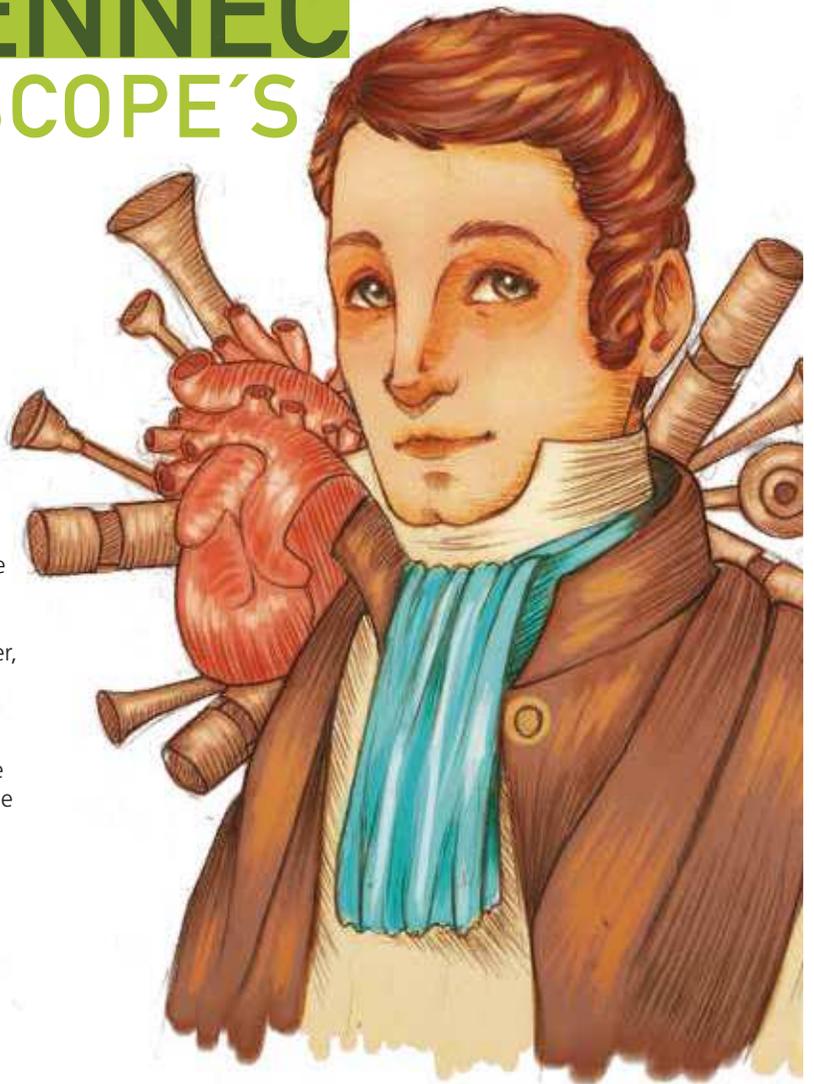
RENÉ LAËNNEC

THE STETHOSCOPE'S INVENTOR

Philologist, humanist, musician, hunter, illustrator, engraver, administrator, creative, medical genius and a good man... are some of characteristics of this important researcher invited by Ingenio.

1 René Théophile Hyacinthe Laënnec was born in Quimper, French Britain, on February 17, 1781. He was son and grandson of lawyers. His grandfather, Michel Alexandre, was mayor of the city and his father, Théophile-Marie, magistrate. About his mother, Michelle Guesdon, it is known that she died when he was six years old.

2 René was a very intelligent and curious boy and he had a great observation capacity. That is why at age 12 he travelled to Nantes to his medical and teacher university uncle's house, with whom he cultivated his vocation of exercising medicine.



3 He was known to be a good student; in addition he spoke English and German. So, at 19, he traveled with a scholarship at the University of Paris, under the leadership of Napoleon Bonaparte's physician, Doctor Corvisart, and the doctor Dupuytren's famous by the contracture that bears his name.

4 Corvisart taught him the percussion to diagnose thoracic problems. Laënnec improved this method by placing his ear directly on the patient thorax, managing to identify normal and abnormal sounds like that of the heart and of the respiratory system.

5 Once graduated, he was employed by the Hospital Necker of Paris, where he was named chief in 1816, year in which he invented the stethoscope. Some say he did it because of the need to have more information for the diagnosis and others because comfort, since the auscultation sticking the ear to patient was inconvenient.

6 His discovery came out from observing the children playing with a long piece of wood with one end in their ears and the other to listen to the blows that were giving to it from another side. This day when he was attending a patient, remembered the fact and coiled a few sheets of paper to do a pipe, one of its ends was located in the woman chest and the other one in his ear.

7 He confirmed that he was listening to the cardiac sounds, much better and clearer. Immediately, he gave orders to Construct a wood instrument, of approximately 30 cm of length and 4 cm of diameter, with a central channel of 5 mm at the ends in a cone shape. The stethoscope was born and the employment of diagnostic methods to complete the medical information.

8 In 1819, Laënnec published his famous book *the mediate auscultation*, which is a classic medicine text.

There he described the sounds of the thorax and presents the foundations for the study of the lungs. He made emphasis in mentioning that "the most important part of an art is to be able to observe adequately".

9 This work caused great sensation in Paris, because he described the sounds that he heard with the stethoscope. In addition, he detailed diseases not described before. Laënnec did contributions in pneumology and reached prestige on having created the anatomy-clinical method: relating findings that he verified in corpses with previous clinical findings.

10 In 1826, appeared the second edition of his book. There, he reported a personal accident when he caught tuberculosis. He described how he treated himself and the changes that he developed later: "diminished Vigor to the middle, loss of weight, fever sensations".

11 Laënnec was a practicing catholic, charitable person, respected for his kindness and very loved by his students and colleagues. He died in 1826 at the age of 45.

12 Three are Laënnec's principal contributions to the history of Medicine: 1. The stethoscope invention, 2. The frame of cardiac and pulmonary diseases and 3. The description of anatomy-pathological injuries. In addition, Laënnec left his mastery in the art of clinical observation and his meticulous and intuitive search of knowledge.

Philologist: Person who studies languages.

Contracture: Involuntary contraction lasting or permanent, of one or more muscle groups.

Stethoscope: From the Greek name *stethos* = chest or heart and *skopeu* = observe.

*These 12 ideas about René Laënnec life resulted from an exhaustive search on different sources of public domain. The text was prepared, reviewed and approved by the Editorial Committee of the Ingenio Magazine.