Babinski Sign in Art

This Renaissance illustration of the Babinski sign was previously left unreported, contrary to several other examples presented by S. Rosenblum in 1914 in her medical diploma thesis under the presidency of professor Marfan in Paris [1]. This work was performed in Babinski's and Netter's services and was dedicated to them. It quoted Laignel-Lavastine, who in 1905 had already mentioned a "spontaneous" Babinski sign in young infants represented in ancient art, with a few examples shown in the *Nouvelle Iconographie de la Salpêtrière*. Rosenblum's paper was not quoted in van Gijn's monography on the Babinski sign [2] but was important in that it quoted numerous examples in the XIVth–XVIth century paintings by Memling, Jan Gossaert, Gerard David, Roger de la Pasture, Hermann Wynrich, Dürer, Bartolo di Fredi, Simone Martini, Boticelli, Lorenzo di Credi, Pratovecchio, Rafael, Perugin, Lippo Memmi, Filippo Lippi, Ercole Grandi, and several other anonymous artists. In contrast to babies, and contrary to a still living legend, I have shown that the Babinski sign is absent in 100% of normal young adults, but having attempted to elicit it in 3,850 males aged 18–19 years undergoing military drafting, without any single success [3].

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References

- 1 Rosenblum S: Du Développement du Système Nerveux au Cours de la Première Enfance. Paris, Le François Librairie, 1915, pp 35–39.
- 2 van Gijn J: The Babinski Sign: A Centenary. Universiteit Utrecht, 1996.
- 3 Bogousslavsky J: The Babinski sign. Pract Neurol 2002;2:126.