



# Kenneth Daniel Blackfan's Contributions to Pediatric Neurosurgery

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## Kenneth Daniel Blackfan (1883-1941)



### Methods

Archival records were obtained from three sources: (1) Department of Archives, Boston Children's Hospital (2) Archives and Records Management, Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine, Harvard Medical School, &, (3) Alan Mason Chesney Medical Archives, Johns Hopkins Medical Institution.

### Introduction

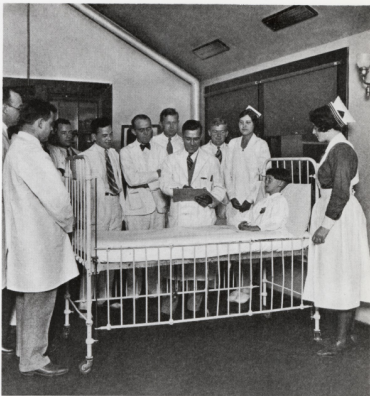
Kenneth Daniel Blackfan was a luminary pediatrician known for his gifted clinical acumen and research prowess. In a career that spanned over 4 decades he made countless contributions to pediatric neurosurgery. In this biographical sketch, we describe his professional achievements at Johns Hopkins and Boston Children's Hospital, along with his personal friendships with neurosurgeons, most notably, Walter Dandy & Harvey Cushing, through their colourful correspondence over the years.

### Results

Kenneth Blackfan graduated from Albany medical college in 1905 as valedictorian. After beginning his career as a pathologist and bacteriologist in Albany, he joined his father in general practice in Cambridge, New York. He subsequently decided on a career in pediatrics and did residency training in Philadelphia and St Louis.

In 1912, he worked at Johns Hopkins Hospital and began his lifelong collaboration with Walter E. Dandy. In 1920, Blackfan spent 3 years as Professor of Pediatrics in Cincinnati before moving to Boston where he served as Professor & Chairman of the Department of Pediatrics at Boston Children's Hospital, Harvard Medical School. Throughout his career, Blackfan performed landmark research on hydrocephalus and cerebrospinal fluid physiology, and contributed to the understanding and management of multiple neurosurgical disorders. We also highlight his unique friendships with Walter Dandy and Harvey Cushing.

### Humorous depiction of Blackfan on rounds



TEACHING DOCTORS FOR CHILDREN EVERYWHERE

Blackfan teaching at bedside (Boston Children's Hospital)

### Conclusions

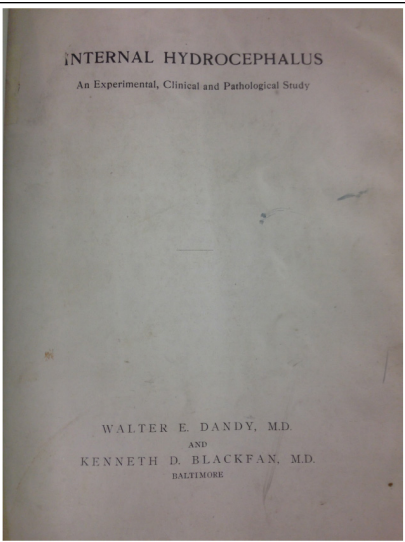
This review of archival biographical information about Kenneth Blackfan provides unique insights about his contributions to the field of pediatric neurosurgery and his personal relationships with the two leading neurosurgeons of his era- Walter Dandy & Harvey Cushing.

### Correspondence

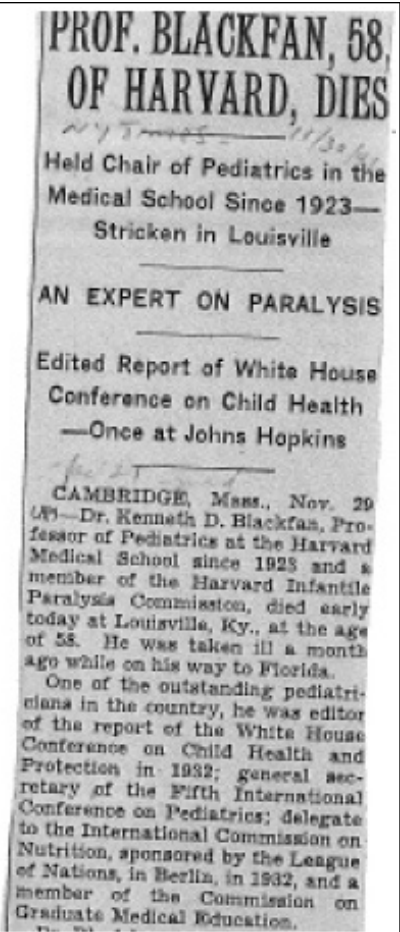
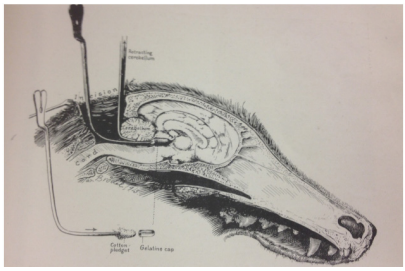
HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL  
DEPARTMENT OF PEDIATRICS

Dear Walter  
Although you lackfully repained from  
drawing me in too tightly - I am  
thoroughly in accord with your idea as to  
where the C.S.F. goes and am delighted at  
the conclusive proof you have. The article  
was accepted. As ever Kenneth

Blackfan writing to Dandy  
discussing CSF physiology



Among Blackfan's major contrubutions were his experiments with Dandy inducing hydrocephalus in dogs, published in two classic papers



The New York Times,  
November 30, 1941

### References

1. In Memorium-Kenneth Daniel Blackfan. Journal of Pediatrics 1942;20
2. Park E. The History iof the Harriet Lane Home. "The Child" symposium, 75th Anniversary 1964; Baltimore
3. James Gamble, et al. "Kenneth D. Blackfan". Harvard Medical Bulletin, April, 1942; 16 Supplement
4. Wilson JL. Kenneth D. Blackfan; 1883-1941. The Journal of Pediatrics 1955; 47:261-7
5. Blackfan KD. The CHildren's Hospital and The Infant's Hospital, Boston, Mass.

### Learning Objectives

By the conclusion of this session, participants should be able to:

- 1) Describe the contributions of Kenneth D Blackfan to pediatric neurosurgery.
- 2) Discuss Blackfan's unique relationships with both Walter Dandy and Harvey Cushing.