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Constipation in (early) infancy and childhood : pathogenesis and diagnostic procedures

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Citation for published version (APA):

de Lorijn, F. (2005). *Constipation in (early) infancy and childhood : pathogenesis and diagnostic procedures*. Amsterdam.

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Download date: 20 Apr 2020

Hirschsprung of Hirschsprung's Disease

Harald Hirschsprung (1830-1916) was born in Copenhagen where his father, of German stock, owned a tobacco factory. His family was rich in musical talent. He completed his medical studies at the University of Copenhagen in 1855 and interned at the Royal Maternity Hospital where he began his lifelong concern with pediatrics. His doctoral thesis dealt with congenital atresia of the esophagus and small intestine. He was instrumental in establishing the Queen Louisa Hospital for Children. The Queen requested that biblical verses be displayed above each bed; Hirschsprung refused and insisted that fanciful pictures of animals be mounted instead. Thereafter, the Queen declined to enter the hospital that had been named for her. In 1888, he published an account of congenital dilatation of the colon that came to bear his name. It was not until much later that the pathogenesis of the condition was defined. A diffident man, he was accorded deference when attending medical congresses because he usually was accompanied by one or the other of two pretty daughters.



