

## Patrick Wall and Ronald Melzack describe the origins of the Gate Control Theory (excerpt 1)

*Oral History Interview with Patrick D. Wall*, 10 August 1993 (Ms. Coll. no. 127.2), John C. Liebeskind History of Pain Collection, History & Special Collections Division, Louise M. Darling Biomedical Library, University of California, Los Angeles

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PATRICK WALL: At this time, with a completely different background or a fairly different background, there was Ron Melzack, with whom I've really never worked in my life, we'd only got to talking. He had worked with [William K.] Livingston [(1894-1966), surgeon and pioneering pain researcher at the University of Oregon] on some sort of classical neurophysiology, so that he knew about physiology. But what he really knew about, which was highly unusual, was animal behavior, which was clearly very odd indeed, if you wanted to have specific systems. So he and I got talking together. You ask about the gate control theory, which is 1965 as published -- if you read what we'd published certainly three years before [Melzack R and Wall PD. On the nature of cutaneous sensory mechanisms. *Brain* 85 (1962): 331-356]-- it says exactly the same thing in it. [they laugh] And we tossed a coin, and I published essentially exactly the same paper -- or, he and I did, only as Wall and Melzack rather than Melzack and Wall, and it was utterly ignored.

LIEBESKIND: What's in a title, eh?

WALL: Yeah. And then we put out the *Science* paper. [Pain mechanisms: A new theory. *Science* 150 (Nov 1965): 971-979.] And as you see, if you read this, we simply tried to bring together everything that we knew and what was in the literature at the time, knowing very well that we could be wrong, and certainly in the details.