

## Celebration of 200 years

Your extensive coverage of *The Lancet's* achievements is a timely reminder of the great contribution the journal has made to advance medical care. While your timeline highlights many significant scientific contributions, the extraordinary role *The Lancet* played in the reform of the profession, hospitals and increasing public accountability of health care deserves more attention.

As you highlight, first and foremost, Thomas Wakley's intention in establishing the journal was to challenge the nepotism and corruption that pervaded the medical profession, the inadequacies of medical education and to expose the incompetence of much clinical practice. This is best illustrated by the extraordinary, game-changing court case he and one of his reporters, James Lambert, instigated in 1828.

Never before, anywhere in the world, had a doctor's competence been subjected to public scrutiny. The case attracted so much public interest, newspapers held their presses until midnight to enable the verdict to go out on the night stagecoaches, something they'd only done once before when they awaited news of George III's death.

We have Wakley and *The Lancet* to thank for this courageous act that contributed to the start of what can be discerned as the start of modern health care. The story of the case and the early years of the journal are told in my recently published novel, based on extensive documentary evidence from the time.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Black N. *The Honourable Doctor*. London, Grosvenor House Press, November 2022. <https://nickblackauthor.com/>