



Honor

Paul L. Tessier, MD

Dr. Paul L. Tessier (right) at a 2005 ceremony where he received the French Legion of Honor Award.

Background

Paul Tessier attended medical school at the Ecole de Médecine in Nantes, France, and received his Doctor of Medicine from the Faculté de Médecine de Paris in 1943. From 1939 until 1941, Dr. Tessier was in military service, the last year of which he spent as a prisoner of war in a German military hospital.

In 1942, Dr. Tessier interned with a general surgeon who operated on cleft lip and Dupuytren's contracture. He continued his work in the surgical profession by going to Paris and joining the pediatric surgery service with Dr. Georges Huc at Hôpital St. Joseph in 1944. Later that year, while Paris was still under occupation by Germany, Dr. Tessier became an assistant at the Center of Maxillo-Facial Surgery of the Military Region of Paris in Hôpital de Puteaux where he remained until 1946. In 1947, the hospital's administration was transferred to Hôpital Foch (Paris), and 2 years later, Dr. Tessier became involved in plastic surgery and burn care. In 1949, he became a surgical consultant in ophthalmology at Nantes but lived and worked in Paris.

In the mid 1950s, Dr. Tessier began innovative work on finding a way to perform osteotomies to correct congenital midfacial retrusion without the relapse that plagued the performance of the procedure years before by one of his mentors, Sir Harold Gillies. In 1958, he began his initial clinical use of the modified procedure. His first transcranial case was in 1961. In realizing the need for bone grafts to fill gaps in the bone that could jeopardize the adjustments made during the procedure, Dr. Tessier started the surgical specialty which he is being honored for creating: craniofacial surgery.

Within 3 years, Dr. Tessier had improved on his initial work by providing exposure for much of the procedure through a coronal approach. He had begun to section the arch rather than the body of the zygoma, and he placed bone grafts in the pterygomaxillary gap, all of which gave added stability to the midface segment without requiring an external headframe. In 1967, he performed a number of demonstration procedures for his peers and asked for their vote on whether this new specialty had a place in the practice of surgery. The positive response launched craniofacial surgery as an important subspecialty.

During the late 1960s and the 1970s, Dr. Tessier developed all of the procedures that are currently used in performing craniofacial surgery: transcranial and subcranial correction of orbital dystopias such as orbital hypertelorism, correction of the facial deformity of Treacher Collins-Franceschetti syndrome, and correction of oro-ocular clefts. Also, in the 1970s, Dr. Tessier began traveling to the U.S. in order to demonstrate the procedures in cities such as Philadelphia, Chicago, Houston, Boston, Kansas City, Charlotte, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Philadelphia, Louisville, and Norfolk.

The impact of Dr. Tessier's work has affected many surgical specialties, including plastic surgery, otorhinolaryngology, ophthalmology, neurosurgery, trauma surgery, and oral and maxillofacial surgery. Many of his techniques have found significant places in the performance of plastic surgery, where Dr. Tessier's methods of autogenous bone grafts have often been seen as an improvement over the traditional use of silicone or acrylic. He also coined the term "SMAS" and created the subperiosteal facelift, or "masklift." Dr. Tessier's work is so far reaching that virtually everyone performing procedures of the craniofacial specialty was either trained by Dr. Tessier himself, or by surgeons he trained.

Dr. Tessier is a founding member of the International Society of Craniofacial Surgery and the European Association of Maxillo-Facial Surgeons, and has been honored many times, including receiving honorary memberships in the American College of Surgeons, the Royal College of Surgeons (London), and the American Society of Plastic Surgeons.

Background *Continued*

Paul L. Tessier, M

1917	Born in Héric, Loire-Atlantique, near Nantes
1936-43	School of Medicine, Nantes
1939-41	Military Service, POW
1944-49	Assistant, Center Maxillofacial Surgery, Military Region, Paris
1944-49	Plastic Surgeon, St. Joseph Hospital, Paris
1949-83	Head of Plastic Surgery and Burn Unit, Hôpital Fôch, Paris
1970-2000	Plastic Surgeon, Clinique Belvédère, Paris



Association Membership

- Founding Member, "Annales de Chirurgie Plastique," 1954
- Société Française de Chirurgie Plastique et Reconstructive, President, 1974
- British Association of Plastic Surgeons
- Corresponding Member, Società Italiana di Chirurgia Plastica Ricostruttiva
- Corresponding Member, Société Française d'Ophtalmologie
- Corresponding Member, Association Française de Chirurgie
- Corresponding Member, International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery
- Corresponding Member, American Society for Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
- Founding Member, Association Française des Chirurgiens Maxillo-Faciaux, President, 1974-75
- Founding Member, International Society of Craniomaxillofacial Surgery [now International Society of Craniofacial Surgery], President, 1983-87
- Honorary Member, European Association of Maxillofacial Surgeons [now European Association for Cranio-Maxillofacial Surgery], President, 1970
- Honorary Fellow, American Association of Plastic Surgery, 1972
- "Gold Medal," Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, 1973

Honors and Awards

- Doctor Honoris Causa, University of Lund, Sweden, 1974
- James Barrett Brown Award, 1975, 2006
- Honorary Fellow, American College of Surgeons, 1975
- Special Citation, American Association of Plastic Surgery, 1981
- Honorary Fellow, Royal College of Surgeons, London, 1984
- Honorary Award, American Association of Plastic Surgery, 1989
- Légion d'Honneur, Paris, France, 2005

