

SELF RETAINING RETRACTORS

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The self retaining retractor is **universal on any surgical set**. A ratcheted device that spreads and holds wound edges apart, whether abdominal, limb, ribs, scalp or sternum. There are a number in common usage: the **Weitlaner** (also known as a West), the **Traverse** or Travers and the **Gelpie**. In the era of burgeoning obesity, the blades of these instruments may not be deep enough to effectively separate the wound edges. Ideally the blades need to be able to get under the adipose tissue to retract fascial edges.



Franz Weitlaner, (1872–1944) was an Austrian physician known for designing the self-retaining retractor bearing his name. His initial higher education was in theology, but at the age of 20 he began medical studies at the University of Innsbruck, where he completed his doctorate in 1898 and his clinical training in 1902. After a stint as a ship's surgeon, he married Leopoldine, and established a general practice in the remote village of Ottenthal. **Lacking adequate surgical assistants there, he developed the retractor which bears his name**, publishing an article on its genesis and design in 1905.



William Travers was born at Abingdon in 1838. He was privately educated and received his professional training at the Charing Cross Hospital, where he was House Surgeon in 1859 and Resident Medical Officer for six years. From 1883 until 1894 he was Physician to the Chelsea Hospital for Women. A busy and successful practitioner, a founder of the British Gynaecological Society and its Honorary Treasurer. He was a freemason. He died after a brief illness from pneumonia following influenza, at Phillimore Gardens on December 17th, 1906.



The Gelpie retractor is **commonly used in scalp and spine surgery**. It is notable because of its two sharp prongs or shanks allowing precise placement in tissues as opposed to the forks of atypical West or Weitlaner retractor.



The origin nor the inventor of the Gelpie retractor is not recorded.