

LANGENBECK RETRACTOR

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The Langenbeck retractor is another one of those retractors that is **highly functional at retracting the body wall**, but is cruelly uncomfortable for the assistant to hold for any extended period of time. Invented by **Bernhard Rudolf Konrad von Langenbeck** (9 November 1810 – 29 September 1887) who was a German surgeon known as the developer of Langenbeck's amputation and founder of Langenbeck's Archives of Surgery.



He was born at Padingbüttel, and received his medical education at Göttingen, where one of his teachers was his uncle Konrad Johann Martin Langenbeck. He gained a doctorate in 1835 with a thesis on the structure of the retina. After a visit to France and England, he returned to Göttingen as Privatdozent, and in 1842 became Professor of Surgery and Director of the Friedrichs Hospital at Kiel. Six years later he succeeded Johann Friedrich Dieffenbach (1794–1847) as Director of the Clinical Institute for Surgery and

Ophthalmology at the Charité in Berlin, and remained there till 1882, when failing health forced him to retire. Langenbeck was a bold and skillful surgeon, but preferred not to operate while other means afforded a prospect of success. He specialised in military surgery and became an authority on the treatment of gunshot wounds. He served as general field-surgeon of the army in the First Schleswig War in 1848 being ennobled for his services. He also served in the Austro-Prussian War in 1866, and the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71. He was in Orléans at the end of 1870 after the city had been taken by the Prussians and in his capacity as surgeon tended to the wounded men. He also utilized the opportunities for instruction at the Militär-ärztliche Gesellschaft, which met twice a weekly for discussions with every surgeon in the city, irrespective of nationality, who were invited to take part.

At the Geneva International Convention, he endorsed the German Emperor's quote on conduct "a wounded enemy is no more an enemy, but a comrade needing help".



Von Langenbeck is perhaps best known today as the **"father of the surgical residency"**. Under his tutelage at the Charite in Berlin, he conceived and developed a system whereby new medical graduates would live at the hospital as they gradually assumed a greater role in the day-to-day care and supervision of surgical patients.