



Lifeline



See Online for appendix

Kathleen Friel is Associate Professor of Neuroscience at Weill Cornell Medicine and the Burke Neurological Institute in White Plains, NY, USA. She earned her PhD in neurophysiology from the University of Kansas Medical Center (Kansas City, KS, USA). Diagnosed with cerebral palsy as a young child, she currently runs a research laboratory to develop more effective interventions for people with cerebral palsy.

What do you think is the most neglected field of science or medicine at the moment?

The latest advances in paediatric neurology still leave millions of children, and their families, with substantial impairments that reduce quality of life. We need effective preventive and rehabilitative therapies, biomarkers of treatment efficacy, and support for children with neurological injuries.

Who inspires you?

Children with cerebral palsy inspire me to continually do the best possible research—they deserve so much more than the current medical system provides.

What is your greatest fear?

My work being forgotten. As a female scientist with cerebral palsy and a speech impairment, my voice is sometimes difficult to be heard. I hope I'll be remembered even when I'm not here to speak for myself.

If you had not entered your current profession, what would you have liked to do?

When I was a child I wanted to be a taxi driver and, as a teenager, an astronaut. I would love to be agile enough to be a regular competitor on *American Ninja Warrior*.

What is your idea of a perfect day?

Sunny fall weather, a nice meal with my family, a Boston sports team win, and having a chance to help someone out.

If you wrote an autobiography, what would be the title?

You'll Never Believe This!

If you were Bill Gates, how would you spend your fortune?

I would work to eliminate the barriers people with disabilities face daily: every place would be accessible and welcoming, and health-care costs and availability would not be a barrier for each person reaching their full potential.

What one discovery or invention would most improve your life?

A cure for metastatic breast cancer would be a game changer for me and the thousands of people who live with this terminal diagnosis. Practically speaking, a device that could translate my impaired speech to be loud and clear would ease my everyday challenges immensely.

What is the best piece of advice you have received?

"Take the blame, share the credit."

Focal Point

50 years of intelligence gone

Gilles de la Tourette (1857–1904) was a French neurologist and personal secretary to Jean Martin Charcot in 1886–87, before becoming his clinical co-director at the Pitié Salpêtrière Hospital (Paris, France) between 1887 and 1888.¹ His name remains attached to an eponym, Tourette's Syndrome, which was attributed to him by Charcot following his description, for the first time, of a new nervous disease in nine patients, in January 1885.²

Found by a French bookseller amongst Tourette's possessions after his death was an unpublished letter of four pages, dated Friday, Dec 17, 1897 (appendix). In the letter, he relays the death of his friend and neighbour, Alphonse Daudet, who he had tried to resuscitate. The letter had presumably been addressed to his Master, Fulgence Raymond (1844–1910), Charcot's successor at Pitié Salpêtrière Hospital. "Last night at 7:30 I was just finishing dinner when the concierge of Mr Alphonse Daudet, my next-door neighbour, penetrated into the dining room distraught crying: 'Quickly, a doctor, Monsieur is dying'. One minute later, I, in turn, entered the dining room of the Daudets. Extended on the floor, on the carpet, was Mr Daudet, surrounded by his two crying sons, wife, and daughter." The letter goes on to say: "At 8:15 Mr Potain arrived: for an hour we performed artificial respiration, forever hoping to make him breathe again: nothing. I thus went to find a rubber tube to inject air into the larynx, then I brought my electric machine, nothing more [...]. He died from a syncope of bulbar origin, or better, from a laryngeal ictus during a progressive locomotor ataxia."

Although Alphonse Daudet was also a playwright, today he is best known as the author of *Letters from my Windmill* (*Lettres de mon Moulin*), a collection of short stories depicting, amongst other things, life in Provence in 1869.³ Tourette had great admiration for the Provençal writer, bemoaning his loss: "One second to kill 50 years of intelligence!". Tourette died from madness caused by syphilis in 1904.⁴

Emmanuel Drouin, Arnaud Kwiatkowski, Patrick Hauteceur

- 1 Walusinski O. Georges Gilles de la Tourette. Beyond the Eponym. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2019: 101–25.
- 2 Walusinski O. Jean Martin Charcot membre de jurys de thèses à la faculté de médecine de Paris (1862–1893). Brou, France: Oscitatio, 2020.
- 3 Daudet A. Lettres de mon Moulin. Impressions e souvenir. Paris, J Hetzel et Ce, 1869.
- 4 Lees AJ. Georges Gilles de la Tourette, the man and his times. *Rev Neurol (Paris)* 1986; **142**: 808–16.