Harvey Williams Cushing graduated from Harvard Medical School in 1895 and underwent his initial training with William Halstead. In 1900 he traveled to Europe and worked with Theodor Kocher and Victory Horsley, the founder of British neurosurgery. On returning to the United States he joined the staff at John Hopkins Hospital where he began his neurosurgical studies. In 1912 he was appointed professor of surgery at Harvard Medical School and surgeon-in-chief at the newly opened Peter Bent Brigham Hospital. He was a pioneering neurosurgeon and developed many of the basic techniques and procedures used in neurosurgery today. Amongst his many paper the most important relate to the method of destruction of the trigeminal ganglion (1900), infiltrative analgesia (1902), the function of the pituitary gland (1910), experimental hypophysectomy (1910), the introduction of electrocoagulation (1928) and basophil adenomas of the pituitary gland (1932).

In addition to his clinical writings he was awarded the Pulitzer prize in 1926 for his book entitled the Life of Sir William Ostler. The endocrine disorder named after him is obviously Cushing's Syndrome or Disease. Cushing's Syndrome is the state of prolonged exposure to
corticosteroids resulting from either excessive cortisol production or steroid medication. Cushing's Disease is pituitary dependent adrenocortical hyperplasia due to a basophilic pituitary microadenoma.

The causes of Cushing's Syndrome are:
- Cushing's Disease (65%)
- Ectopic ACTH production (15%)
- Adrenal adenoma (15%)
- Adrenal carcinoma (5%)

"I would like to see the day when somebody would be appointed surgeon somewhere who had no hands, for the operative part is the least part of the work"

*Letter to Dr Henry Christian Nov 20, 1911.*

Harvey Cushing, a Sophomore at Yale, in Atlantic City ca. 1895

On the back Cushing wrote to his sister, Alice, "Here is the proud likeness you asked for, showing the effects of Atlantic City on a meagre Yank."

Education at Yale, Harvard, and MGH, 1887-1896 Cushing attended Yale College from 1887 to 1891. In his first year he rented rooms with his cousin Perry W. Harvey in a rooming house at 166 York Street, a building that is still standing. He soon became a fervent Eli who played on the baseball team for four years, rooted for the Yale football team, was tapped for the secret society Scroll and Key, and served on committees to plan Class of '91 special events.
Cushing (right) and Classmate on the Old Yale Campus

Yale Baseball Team

Cushing is third from the right on the top row. Kirke Cushing objected to Harvey playing college sports, but eventually became resigned. In his senior year, Cushing was captain of the team.

In contrast to his four years of social life at Yale, Cushing's next four years at Harvard Medical School were devoted to hard work. Even as a medical student, he assisted in operations, especially by administering ether. After receiving his M.D. in 1895, he stayed on for another year as a house officer at the Massachusetts General Hospital.
House officers, South Side, Massachusetts General Hospital, July 1896

Cushing stayed on for a year as an intern at Massachusetts General Hospital, loosely connected with Harvard Medical School. He was assigned to the new south side of the Hospital. Left to right: Harvey Cushing (senior), J.W. Cummin (externe), Dr. William M. Conant (visiting surgeon), J.C. Hubbard, F.S. Newell (junior).

The Johns Hopkins Years and Becoming a Neurosurgeon:

After a trip to Baltimore with his brother, Ned, Cushing wrote to William Stewart Halsted, professor of surgery at Johns Hopkins to inquire about a position as assistant resident at Johns Hopkins. Eccentric in his personal habits, Halsted was an outstanding surgeon, known for his long, careful, and innovative operations. He was especially at pains to control bleeding in surgery. Cushing’s early surgery focused on abdominal work, but by 1899 he had become especially interested in the nervous system and had developed a new operation for trigeminal neuralgia, a disorder of a facial nerve. Though Cushing benefited greatly from working with Halsted, he formed a much closer personal bond with William Osler, Johns Hopkins professor of medicine, who became his mentor and role model.
After a Wanderjahr abroad in 1900-1901, Halsted offered Cushing a position as an Associate in surgery working in neurology and neurosurgery, and teaching surgical anatomy and operative surgery to medical students. In addition to treating charity patients in the wards, Cushing would have the opportunity of earning fees from private patients. It was during the first decade of the new century that Cushing rose to international fame as the first specialist in neurosurgery and an expert on the pituitary gland. Patients came from far away to be operated on for brain tumors.

Harvey Cushing in 1900. For his year abroad, Cushing grew a mustache that disappeared before he returned to Baltimore.
Harvey received the degree of A.B. from Yale University in 1891, and those of A.M. and M.D. from Harvard University and its Medical Department in 1895. Graduate of the Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, 1896. Resident in Baltimore. Harvey Cushing began his career at the Massachusetts General Hospital in 1895-96. He moved to Baltimore to work at the Johns Hopkins Hospital where he stayed for 15 years, mostly at the Faculty of Surgery. In 1912, he returned to Harvard as Professor of Surgery and also worked at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital (1913-1932). In 1933, he became Professor of Neurology at Yale, a position he held until 1937. Considered a pioneer of Neurosurgery, he made several fundamental discoveries about the pituitary gland. Bibliophile and an earnest collector of books, he published many essays and other literary works, among them the 1926 Pulitzer prize-winning biography of William Osler.

Associate Professor of Surgery, John Hopkins University 1902 - 1912. Professor of Surgery at Harvard University and surgeon-in-chief, Peter Bent Brigham Hospital 1912 - 1932. Sterling Professor of Neurology at Yale University 1933 - 1939. Director of U.S.A. Base Hospital No. 5 in France attached to the B.E.F., May 1917 to March 1919. Recipient of many honors at home and abroad, MC, DSM (U.S.) etc. Author of several medical treatises and "The Life of Sir William Osler", which won the Pulitzer Prize (1925). His notable library of medical history is at Yale University.

Photograph of Cushing For His Portrait by Ida Tarbell, 1908
Harvey Cushing by John Singer Sargent: American painter, 1916, Yale Medical Library. Sargent's sketch was used to design the 45 cent Cushing Stamp (USA) which was issued in 1988.

THE CUSHING FAMILY

Family Boat Trip up the Great Lakes in 1898
Left to right: Betsey Maria Cushing (HC's mother) holding Edward H. (Pat) Cushing (infant son of HC's brother Ned), Harvey Cushing, Kate Crowell, Melanie Harvey Cushing (wife of Ned) and Dr. Ned Cushing
After a long courtship, Harvey Cushing married Kate Crowell on June 10, 1902 in Cleveland. They had known each other from childhood. The couple moved into No. 3 W. Franklin St., Baltimore, next door to William and Grace Osler, whose company they thoroughly enjoyed. They were saddened when Osler was named Regius Professor at Oxford in 1905.

The Cushings lived at 305 Walnut Street in Brookline from 1912, a Boston suburb, until they left for New Haven in 1933.
By the time the Cushings moved to Brookline, Massachusetts in 1912, they had four children. The last child, Barbara, was born in 1915. As Harvey focused on his surgical career to the point of workaholism, Kate, a highly competent woman, was left to manage the household and raise five children largely on her own.

*Kate Cushing with Children*
William Harvey (Bill), born 1903, Kate, Mary Benedict (Minnie), born 1906, Betsey, born 1908, Henry Kirke, born 1910.

*Kate Cushing with Children*
Betsey, Kate Cushing, Henry, William, Mary
Harvey Cushing lived long enough to see his second daughter Betsey marry James Roosevelt, son of Franklin Roosevelt, and become the mother of two daughters, Sara and Kate.

The Cushings at Their Summer Cottage, 1921

The Cushing Family spent summers at Little Boar's Head on the shore of New Hampshire, though typically Kate Cushing would take the family while her husband remained at work or traveled abroad. This is the one picture we have showing Harvey Cushing with his family.

Front: Henry, Kate Cushing, Barbara
Back: William, Betsey, Mary, Harvey Cushing
Standing: Mrs. Crowell

Peter Bent Brigham Hospital and War Service:

In the first decade of the twentieth century Cushing received many offers of professorships and chiefs of surgery, including one from Yale, but he chose to stay at Hopkins where he had ample opportunity to expand his knowledge of neurosurgery. He hoped he might eventually be able to return to Harvard. Finally in 1910, he received an offer to become chief of surgery in Harvard's new Peter Bent Brigham Hospital. For two years Cushing stayed on in Baltimore until the hospital was built. He and his family moved to the Boston area in 1912, and even then it wasn't ready.
Cushing in Uniform, 1917

Cushing was commissioned as a major in the U.S. Army and was later promoted to lieutenant colonel. One of his army uniforms is on display in the case in the corridor leading to the Historical Library.

Not long after Cushing settled in at the P.B.B.H., war was declared abroad. Cushing went to France twice to oversee a surgical unit and to operate on the wounded, especially those with head wounds. The first was in 1915 when he headed a Harvard unit for a three-month stint at the Ambulance americain in Paris. In 1917, he took charge of U.S. Base Hospital No. 5, composed of Harvard staff, and remained in Europe until the end of the war.
Pavlov, the famed Russian physiologist, attended the 13th International Physiological Congress in Boston in August, 1929. He visited Cushing's laboratory and inscribed a piece of meat with Cushing's new electrosurgical knife. He also observed a Cushing operation. Photo by Walter W. Boyd

Cushing was at the height of his career as neurosurgeon, researcher, and clinical teacher in the 1920s. He was chief of surgery at Peter Bent Brigham Hospital and Moseley Professor of Surgery at Harvard Medical School. Patients were sent to him from near and far, so that by 1931, he had completed 2000 tumor operations. It was at the Brigham that he trained the next generation of neurosurgeons and demonstrated his operations to visitors from around the world. In these years, with Percival Bailey and then Louise Eisenhardt, he carefully collected and studied his clinical data to name, classify, and improve the removal of tumors from all parts of the brain.
According to the retirement rules Cushing himself had helped to set, he was to retire from Peter Bent Brigham Hospital at the age of 63. Showered with offers, including remaining at Harvard, he finally chose to return to Yale as Sterling Professor of Neurology (he preferred Neurology to Neurosurgery because he no longer felt in good enough health to operate). Though Cushing did not teach or do his own operations at Yale, he took part in a variety of Yale activities and was able to complete a number of major writing projects. At the time of his death, he was working on his A Bibliography of Andreas Vesalius. Moreover, he initiated the project, with Fulton and Klebs, of pooling their rare medical books to give to Yale if Yale would build a library to house them. Cushing’s lobbying among the administration and Corporation led to the decision to build a new medical library (medical books and journals were previously in Sterling Memorial Library) with a wing devoted to the Historical Library. Cushing heard that building would begin just before he died of a heart attack on October 7, 1939. Cushing’s Yale class of 1891, celebrating their 50th reunion, paid for the decoration of the Library rotunda. His Yale classmate and longtime friend, Grover Atterbury was the architect of the Library.
The gift of his many books and extensive private collection of exhibits and documents along with the gifts of two other doctors formed (in 1941) the foundation of today's Yale Medical Library called the Harvey Cushing / John Hay Whitney Medical Library.

Dr. Cushing received many honors, including more than twenty honorary degrees, and was one of six individuals, and the only surgeon, to be elected to Honorary Fellowship in the British Royal College of Physicians. His biography of Sir William Osler was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1926.