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Samuel Rosen: The Accidental father of Modern Stapes Surgery

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Samuel Rosen was from a large family living in a poor area of Syracuse, NY. After initially studying law he changed to medicine and was awarded his degree in 1921. In 1952 Rosen reported his first case of stapes mobilisation, restoring hearing in a patient with otosclerosis. His continued search for definitive management of all patient with this condition led him to question why the well-established fenestration technique he had come to use so successfully, only worked in two thirds of cases to restore hearing. While assessing stapes mobility in a patient he accidentally applied enough additional pressure to cause the previously immobile stapes to move, and in doing so fully restored his patients hearing.

Samuel Rosen is arguably the father of modern stapes surgery, having inadvertently developed mobilisation in stapes fixation that paved the way for development of current hearing restorative surgery techniques including use of stapes prosthesis. His technique was met with scepticism by his colleagues, and he received little acclaim for his discovery and its subsequent impact on the surgery we perform today. However, without his 'accident' progress in this field of otolaryngology may have been stalled, leaving thousands of people without the benefit of hearing.