French surgeon and prolific writer justifiably described as the founder of modern surgery.

Paré was born in Bourg-Hersent, Mayenne, in 1509. His father was a valet and a baker and Ambroise received little in the way of formal education. He started his medical apprenticeship with a barber in Angers, continuing his studies in anatomy and surgery with a barber surgeon in Paris 1532-33. He then found a position at the Hotel-Dieu, the largest Paris hospital. In 1536 he became a military surgeon with the army of Marechal Montejan in the Italian campaign. He remained with the army for most of his life and was also surgeon at the courts of Henri II, Francis II, Charles IX, and Henri III.

Paré published several books on surgery concentrating particularly on battle wounds. He abandoned the brutal practice of cauterizing gunshot wounds with hot irons and boiling oil and used instead an ointment made of egg yolk, oil of roses, and turpentine. He had stumbled on this new treatment by accident when he had run out of boiling oil on a busy battlefield and achieved spectacular results by using the ointment. His book on the subject, *La Méthode de traiter les playes faites par les arcquebuses et autres bastons au feu* (*Methods of Treating Wounds Inflicted by Arquebuses and Other Firearms* (1545)), established his reputation and became a standard military textbook in all European armies. It was also translated into Dutch.

Paré advocated the use of ligatures rather than cauterization to close the blood vessels on an amputated limb, a procedure that has been described as the greatest ever advance in surgery. However, this was a skilled operation that required the cooperation of the patient in a long and painful procedure and was not generally practised until the early 18th century, when the screw tourniquet was invented by Jean Petit. Paré also made innovations in the management of difficult childbirth, the extraction of teeth, and the filling of dental cavities. He devised artificial dentures and made plans for prosthetics - an artificial hand made of iron and an artificial eye.

After the Luxemburg campaign in 1552 he was recommended to Henri II and joined his team of surgeons. Sent by the king to Metz, which was under siege, he was taken prisoner by the Duc de Savoie but retrieved his liberty after he had cured an ulcer on the duc's leg. After the death of Henri II he kept his place as court surgeon through the reigns of Francis I, Charles IX, and Henri III. Paré is believed to have been a Huguenot and it is thought that it was through the intervention of Charles IX that he escaped the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572.
Paré wrote numerous books. In 1549 he published an anatomical handbook for surgeons, *Brève Collection de l'administration économique, avec la manière de conjoindre les os* and in 1563 *Dix livres de la chirurgie avec le magasin des intruments necessaires a icelle*. He wrote on the subject of plague and leprosy as well as surgery and childbirth. His *Oeuvres complètes/Complete Works* (1575) was translated into several languages. It had been reprinted three times by the time of his death at the age of 80, on 22 December 1590.

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