

Napoleon died of kidney illness, says new book by Danish doctor

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A retired Danish doctor claimed Tuesday to have uncovered the true cause of Napoleon's death, saying the French emperor died of a lengthy kidney illness instead of the being poisoned by his enemies.

In the latest twist in a long-running medical saga, Arne Soerensen wrote in a new book "Napoleon's nyrer" (Napoleon's kidneys) published this week that Napoleon died of kidney and urinary problems, which inflicted him for many years.

The retired physician from Aalborg told AFP he studied and analysed Napoleon's life and health for 50 years "from his childhood until his death".

"From a young age, Napoleon suffered chronic shrinking around his urinary canal, chronic infections in his withered [bladder](#), a kidney illness and obstructive nephropathy that led to deadly complications," he said.

"He had pain urinating for a long time, to the point that one day he said: 'it will kill me,'" Soerensen told AFP, adding that Napoleon suffered these symptoms from the 1790s until his death in 1821 at the age of 51.

The doctor, 82, said he studied doctors' reports and autopsies into his death and concluded that Napoleon was ill during his military campaigns in Italy (1796) and Russia (1812) right up to the Battle of Waterloo in 1815.

"A lot of experts and historians have written about Napoleon and his cause of death. They have also raised his urinary problems, but considered them insignificant," Sorensen said.

"In reality, they (the urinary problems) are the key to understanding the evolution of his illness and his death," he added.

The enduring myth in France is that the perfidious British poisoned Napoleon with arsenic while he was exiled on St. Helena. Other theories suggest that the deposed emperor was felled by stomach cancer -- and French military food was a possible cause.

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