James Lind (1716-1794), studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh. In 1747, while studying medicine he saw many scurvy ridden sailors and noted that few experienced considerable relief from citrus fruits.

He began his medical career as surgeon’s mate in the British navy. Great Britain as a maritime nation depended for its naval security on the efficiency of its fleet, which was threatened most, by scurvy. It was natural for Lind to become interested in scurvy, which attacked men on long voyages.

He read about the disease in besieged towns and exploring expeditions; wherever the diet was limited and monotonous, without vegetables and fresh fruits. Remembering the experience with his old patients, he believed that it was caused by the limited diet and should be curable by proper additions.

When he was placed in charge of the naval hospital at Haslar in 1758, he began attempts to get the navy to adopt citrus fruits as a dietary staple. Unfortunately brass hats were notoriously conservative and the progress was slow.

Captain Cook (1728-1779), tested the dietary theories of Lind during his second expedition in southern waters from 1772 to 1775, and found them to be sound. He kept off scurvy by this means during this great expedition, losing only one man in three years. He received medal from Royal Society for this, and still the navy hesitated. During his third and last voyage from 1776 to 1779 he sailed full north south of Pacific Ocean, and discovered Hawaiian Islands on the way. He was killed in a scuffle with the native; since they practiced cannibalism, he was presumably eaten.

Lind became physician to King George III in 1783 and still could not carry his point. It was not until 1795, a year after Lind died, and British navy was under pressure against French revolutionaries, that navy adopted the practice of feeding lime juice to sailors. Scurvy was wiped out and British sailors have been called “limeys” ever since. It was to be a century before the work of Eijkman and others showed that Lind unknowingly was treating a vitamin deficiency disease.

Lind also strove for the establishment of hospital ships in tropic waters, for cleanliness and good ventilation in sick bays. He is generally considered the father of naval hygiene.