

# In Memory of Stefan Wesołowski (1908–2010)

On December 26<sup>th</sup> 2009, in the 102<sup>nd</sup> year of his unique life, Professor Stefan Wesołowski, a teacher and tutor of many generations of Polish urologists, died.

Until his final days, he played an active role in the activities of the society of Polish urologists. Because of this, his extraordinarily characteristic, rich, vivid, expressive, and multidimensional personality is well known by not only physicians of older generations, but also by the adepts of our specialty, all of whom held him in high esteem.

Stefan Jacenty Wesołowski was born on August 16<sup>th</sup> 1908 (in a stone building) near Płońsk. His education started in an elementary school in Szczytno. From 1919 he attended junior high at the Polish School Mother School in Płońsk, however, due to the high costs of tuition, in 1922 he was forced to interrupt his education at this school.

From 1923 he attended the State Junior High School in memory of Stanisław Konarski in Dubno, Wołyń where education was gratuitous. There he received his diploma in June of 1927. For his educational standing, due to a scholarship application submitted by a visiting superintendent, he was awarded with a scholarship from the mayor of Dubno in the amount of 600 PLN per year. This allowed him to continue his education at the Medical Faculty of the University of Warsaw.

He graduated on June 30<sup>th</sup> 1933, after which he served his obligatory postgraduate year-long internship at the Infant Jesus' Hospital in Warsaw. Upon completing his military service at the Sanitary Reserve Cadet's Training Center in Warsaw in 1935 he was hired as a volunteer in the Department of Surgery at the Infant Jesus' Hospital in Warsaw.

On March 15<sup>th</sup> 1936 he began his career as an assistant of Dr. Waclaw Lilpop in the Urological Department of Saint Lazarus Hospital in Warsaw.

He received the doctoral degree on the basis of his work entitled 'Suprascapular Anesthesia in Urology' on December 9<sup>th</sup> 1938.

After the outbreak of World War II, he worked at the District Hospital in Toruń as a second lieutenant surgeon as well as in the Field Hospitals of Żychlin and Dobrzelin during the battle of Bzura. After he was taken prisoner by the Germans, he worked at the hospital in Sochaczew; however, because of lack of physicians in Warsaw hospitals, he was transferred by the German occupier to work at Saint Lazarus Hospital in Warsaw. He worked in the department of urology, headed by Dr. Waclaw Lilpop, until December 1942. From January 1<sup>st</sup> 1943 he worked in the Surgical Department at Wolski Hospital at 26 Płocka St. in Warsaw, headed by Dr. Marian Piasecki. His transfer to the surgical department was motivated by the following: 'My separation from urology was not only a separation from my dear chief and favorite department, but also a loss of significant financial resources. I did, however, come to the conclusion that unless I do it now and learn general surgery, I will never be a good urologist. I was 34 years old then and it was my last favorable moment to go back into general surgery.'

During the German occupation Professor Wesołowski took an active part in the resistance movement. He provided surgical aid to wounded partisans who, despite gunshot wounds, were admitted to tuberculosis departments with 'safe' diagnoses, e.g. 'elbow tuber-



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culosis'. In this way he saved soldiers of the National Army i.a. after the daring 'Góral' action and the famous assassination of Gen. Franz Kutschera. He worked in Wolski Hospital until the first days of the Warsaw Uprising. On August 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> 1944 the Germans executed physicians and staff who were working there (including the hospital director, Dr. Marian Piasecki) as well as their patients. It took place at the location of the mass execution of Wola's citizens, where about 12,000 people were also shot. Only three doctors survived: Leon Matuffel, Zbigniew Woźniewski, and Stefan Wesołowski.

Stefan Wesołowski worked at Warsaw's Hospital for Infectious Diseases until the end of the Warsaw Uprising. In 1945 he took a job in the Surgical Department at Wolski Hospital in Warsaw. On December 1<sup>st</sup> 1951 he became the head of this hospital's newly created urological department of which he remained in charge until 1962. From 1950 to 1953, Prof. Wesołowski also led the Urological Department at the Municipal Hospital No. 1 located at 17 Kasprzaka St.

In 1946 Professor Wesołowski committed himself to creating a urological clinic with academic status within the University of Warsaw's Medical Faculty. The coronation occurred on April 12<sup>th</sup> 1948 when the Clinic of Urology was opened. The only professor of urology in Poland at that time, Stanisław Laskownicki, was appointed as head of the clinic. Dr. Stefan Wesołowski was appointed to be the assistant professor and immediately began to organize a didactic base and library. Prof. Laskownicki resigned his position in 1950 because of difficulties with obtaining enough space for expansion of the clinic. In that very year, the independent Medical University of Warsaw emerged from the fusion of the medical and pharmaceutical faculties with the division of dentistry.

On January 1<sup>st</sup> 1951, on the basis of the urological department created in 1943 by dr. Zygmunt Traczyk on the ground floor of the 6th pavilion at the Infant Jesus' Hospital in Warsaw, the Clinic of Urology at the Medical University of Warsaw was created. The clinic consisted of 4 wards, 45 beds, 1 operating theater, 2 endoscopic rooms, and an X-ray laboratory. The clinic also supervised a 30-bed sanatorium in Szczawno Zdrój.

In 1951 he completed his associate professor program on the basis of a study titled, 'Urine diversion to the digestive tract'. In 1954 he was appointed associate professor and on September 4<sup>th</sup> 1954 Prof. Stefan Wesołowski was appointed as head of the Clinic of Urology at the Medical University of Warsaw. However, he did not receive his title of full professor for another 22 years, in June of 1976, due to the political reasons.

Despite well-known difficulties typical to that period (the Iron Curtain), Professor managed to be in contact with global science. He and his followers were able to keep pace with rapid scientific development, bringing to life a resilient scientific center, whose functional span included the entire country. Professor Wesołowski, while still the head of the urological department at Wolski Hospital, he carried out the following procedures for the first time in Poland: Milin's prostatic adenomectomy (1947), a partial nephrectomy due to tuberculosis of a single kidney (1953), the replacement of a ureter defect with a fragment of ileum (1953), and augmentation of a small tuberculous urinary bladder with intestine (1954). After his transfer to the Clinic of Urology at the Medical University of Warsaw he conducted, for the first time in Poland, the following surgical interventions: surgery for urethrorectal fistula (1956), Bricker's surgery (1956), upper ureteral reconstruction with vermiform appendix (1960).

In an effort to provide his patients with appropriate conditions and his goal of creating an up-to-date scientific data base, in 1949, when the clinic did not possess a permanent headquarters, Professor Wesołowski began efforts to obtain one. Despite the problems encountered while coming to an agreement with authorities at the Medical University of Warsaw, the hospital director, and the Ministry of Health, construction on the grounds of Infant Jesus' Hospital in Warsaw was started in April 1966. In December 1970, the move to a new separate building began. Out-patient facilities were opened in December 1970 and the first patients were hospitalized a year later.

Professor Wesołowski had lectures and classes with students from the beginning of his career in the Clinic of Urology at the Medical University of Warsaw until the end of 1980. Under his supervision, 29 doctoral theses were completed.

He is an author of 550 publications. During his work at Wolski Hospital (presently, the National Tuberculosis Institute) in Warsaw he published many studies on tuberculosis of genitourinary organs, especially applications of ileum and sigmoid colon in urological surgery. In 1960, a two-volume urology manual that he edited and titled 'Urology' was published. The issues that were elaborated by him for decades were injuries to genitourinary organs, especially trauma to the urinary bladder and ureters during gynecological, urological, and surgical interventions as well as post-plastic surgical complications. In 1980, a monograph titled 'Ureteral Traumas' was published, which he considered to be his life-work. In the years of 1951-1974, Professor Wesołowski was the national consultant in urology to the Minister of Health.

In cooperation with the Medical Center of Postgraduate Education he trained over 600 physicians and contributed to the opening of many new urological departments. Most notable were those in small towns where patients were deprived of specialist treatments.

Professor Wesołowski was the secretary of the executive board of the Polish Urological Association (PUA) for the first two terms. After which, from 1954-1958, he served as the editor in chief of the official journal of the PUA, Polish Urology. Later, from 1960-1962, he was the chairman of the PUA, which awarded him with the title of Honorary Member.

He remained the head of the Clinic of Urology at the Medical University of Warsaw until his retirement on September 30<sup>th</sup> 1978. However, he remained at the clinic as a supervisor from 1978 to 1980 during the time when associate professor Andrzej Borkowski was appointed to be the acting head of the department. In September 1980 he was appointed to be a professor at the University of Garyounis, Medical Faculty in Benghazi, Libia. During this time he also practiced as a urologist at a hospital in Sirte. From January 1<sup>st</sup> 1986 to April 30<sup>th</sup> 1992 he worked at the District Hospital in Ciechanów, where he organized and equipped his own surgical department with 35 beds. In 1998 the department was named after him.

He concluded his practice of medicine in 1992.

He was the last living founding member of the Polish Urological Association (PUA) and one of the last living founding members of the European Association of Urology (EAU). As an Honorary Member of both, he's a man that will go down in history.

**In honor of his memory!**

**Prof. Andrzej Borkowski**