

The Memorial of Professor Marek Pawlicki

On March 4, 2018, Professor Marek Pawlicki passed away — a teacher of many of us, a passionate scientist, one of the doyens of Polish oncology creating in the 20th century the foundations of chemotherapy and clinical oncology in Poland. He was extraordinary, very emotional man with expressive (often controversial) opinions. However, first and foremost I remembered him as a physician with a great clinical intuition, devoted to development of new treatment methods and guided by the principle “never take the patient away from hope”.

Marek Pawlicki was born on July 12, 1934 in Poznań. He spent his early childhood in Września, and from 1940 he lived in Kraków, where in 1951 he graduated from Priest Stanisław Konarski Secondary School. In 1957 he graduated from medical studies and obtained a doctor's diploma at the Medical Academy in Kraków (currently Collegium Medicum of the Jagiellonian University). His entire professional life was associated with the Kraków Branch of the Centre of Oncology, where Professor Pawlicki worked uninterruptedly for 46 years. He started working at the Oncology Centre straight after graduation in January 1958 and continued until he reached retirement age in December 2004. The first years of his work Professor Pawlicki spent at the Oncology Clinic, under the direction of Professor Halina Glińska. In 1967 he obtained the title of Doctor of Medicine, defending his doctoral dissertation about the results of oral cancer treatment. In the 1970s, his professional interests began to focus on innovative at that time methods of systemic treatment: chemotherapy and the first attempts of pharmacological hormone therapy. Therefore, in 1974, when the Department of General Oncology was divided, he became the Head of the Chemotherapy Department of the Kraków Branch of the Centre of Oncology. Doctor Marek Pawlicki created this clinic from scratch and defined its character as preliminary investigating and introducing the new methods of treatment. Therefore, soon after setting up this clinic become one of the most important chemotherapy units in Poland. Future specialists of cancer

chemotherapy, often from faraway corners of Poland, came to internships to learn under his direction and familiarize themselves with new therapies.

Doctor Marek Pawlicki participated as a researcher in dozens of clinical trials devoted to new treatment methods of cancers and their symptoms. The effect of this passion was about 260 publications in both Polish and international journals. In addition to research about new forms of therapy, he was interested in the causes of delays in cancer diagnosis and treatment as well as the relationship between oncology and alternative medicine therapies used by patients.

Dr Marek Pawlicki's scientific work resulted in habilitation thesis on the role of chemotherapy and hormone therapy in breast cancer management, which he defended in 1979. In April 1988 he was appointed professor. Professor Pawlicki directed the chemotherapy clinic until the end of his career at the Centre of Oncology in December 2004. Professor Pawlicki's passion was also spreading oncological knowledge; he was a co-author of therapeutic recommendations and over 10 books: mainly textbooks, but also popular science publications as well as memories of his oncologist's work. He was one of the first editors and founders of the „Oncology in Clinical Practice” journal and a reviewer of numerous scientific papers and doctorates. For many years he organized courses for specialization in cancer chemotherapy and oncology as well as oncological lectures for primary care physicians; he also participated in specialization examinations. He educated many specialists in chemotherapy and clinical oncology, he was the promoter of several doctoral dissertations, and many of the consultants and current head of the departments of clinical oncology are his students.

That's about just facts; but for us, his colleagues, much more important is the mere mention of style of work with Professor Pawlicki, methods of treatment and decision-making mechanisms used in his Clinic. In current medical reality with abundance of available therapies, but limitations arising from numerous recommendations and evidence-based medicine it is probably

difficult to imagine that specific work climate, with predominance of clinical trials on new preparations, which were often the only available treatment options for our patients. During morning briefings (being very often brainstorming) under Professor Pawlicki supervision new chemotherapy regimens were developed, or the old ones modified according to the patient's individual needs. We attempted to use a treatment with all available forms of immunotherapy: interferons, BCG, DNCB, IL2, metronomic therapy, chronotherapy, high doses of etoposide or methotrexate, and many other drugs currently remembered only by older oncologists. Thanks to Professor's international research contacts, we got acquainted with many currently used medicines like docetaxel, vinorelbine, liposomal doxorubicin, or pemetrexed already at the stage of their clinical trials and we participated in pivotal studies. The scientific contacts established by the Professor in centres in Milan, Paris or Vienna resulted in academic research and internships, and often access to information about the latest concepts in science already during their creation.

However, the atmosphere at the clinic was far from the cold laboratory or lecture rooms and to a large extent it was shaped by Professor's new ideas and emotional personality. As Professor was interested in motor sports and football, often during the briefing there were digressions on sports subjects. Professor Pawlicki has been repeatedly able to surprise us with remarkable medical intuition, both in predicting complications during treatment and in detecting patients with potential psychological or psychological problems hindering treatment. We have not always found a rational justification for his intuition and forecasts, which is why it sometimes happened that we resisted and disbelieved. However, after a few episodes confirming that our knowledge cannot always compare with Professor's intuition or knowledge, we have learned to trust his predictions.

It is difficult to express all the achievements and activities of Professor Marek Pawlicki in these short words and describe the richness of his personality. As our Teacher and Mentor, Professor will remain forever in our memory.

Marek Ziobro