

The foundation of the Polish Cardiac Society and the *Polish Heart Journal*

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ABSTRACT

Polish cardiology began to evolve as a separate branch of internal medicine before 1918, and further development came in the interwar period. Until 1939, the greatest contribution to the development of cardiology as an independent clinical specialty was made by Mściwój Semerau-Siemianowski, professor of the University of Warsaw, who continued these efforts after World War II. In 1950, on his initiative, the Section of Cardiology was created at the Polish Society of Internal Medicine. In 1954, the Section was transformed into the Polish Cardiac Society. Jerzy Jakubowski became its president. At that time, Polish cardiologists had already managed to prepare several independent publishing projects, including 5 volumes of the collective monograph *Advances in Cardiology (Postępy Kardiologii)*. The culmination of these activities was the *Polish Heart Journal (Kardiologia Polska)*, a quarterly issued by the Polish Cardiac Society regularly since 1957. Jerzy Jakubowski became its editor-in-chief and the editorial office was located in Łódź.

Polish cardiology in the years 1918–1939 Cardiology was recognized as a field separate from internal medicine before 1918. However, during the entire interwar period, there was no separate cardiology professorial chair or department at any of the Polish universities, nor were there separate cardiology classes offered. This area of medicine was developed within chairs and departments of internal medicine.^{1–3} Nevertheless, some Polish internists did specialize in cardiology in the years 1918 to 1939. A group of professors employed at university faculties of medicine played an important role in the development of cardiology. A few of them chaired departments of internal medicine (there were usually 2 such chairs at a university). Those who were most cardiology-oriented were: Witold Orłowski, who was chair of Internal Medicine at Jagiellonian University (1920–1925) and then at the University of Warsaw (1925–1939); Jerzy Latkowski, chair at Jagiellonian University (1925–1939); Kazimierz Rzętkowski, chair at the University of Warsaw (1919–1924); Aleksander Januszkiewicz, chair at Stefan Batory University in Vilnius

(1921–1939); and Jan Henryk Lubieniecki, chair at Poznań University (1923–1939).^{4–11}

Apart from professors of internal medicine, scholars who specialized in other fields, particularly those who held chairs of surgery at faculties of medicine, also took interest in cardiology. Cardiac issues were also dealt with by Professor Marian Franke, chair of General and Experimental Pathology at Jan Kazimierz University in Lviv in the years 1921 to 1939; Włodzimierz Koskowski, chair of Experimental Pharmacology at the same university in the years 1925 to 1939; and Marian Eiger, chair of Physiology at Stefan Batory University in Vilnius in the years 1922 to 1938.^{12–14}

Those listed above not only were cardiology practitioners but also published the results of their cardiological research. However, it should be emphasized that usually they also had publications in other areas of medicine. The professor who focused mainly on cardiology was Mściwój Semerau-Siemianowski. He did not chair any department at any of the universities, but in the years 1929 to 1935 was the so-called titular professor at the University of Warsaw. It was

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him who, already in the interwar period and even more extensively after 1945, worked in order to establish cardiology as a separate clinical specialty.¹⁵

The Cardiology Section of the Polish Society of Internal Medicine (1950–1954) Before 1939, and directly after World War II, physicians-cardiologists could join the Polish Society of Internal Medicine (PSIM), which had been established in 1906. Polish cardiologists invested much effort towards creating their own independent scientific society at the end of the 1940s. The group was headed by Professor Mściwój Semerau-Siemianowski. In November 1949, at the 2nd Department of Internal Medicine in the University of Warsaw, he organized a meeting of heads of several internal medicine departments that specialized in cardiology. They agreed to establish a Cardiology Section within the PSIM and elected its temporary board which consisted of Chairman Mściwój Semerau-Siemianowski, Vice-Chairman Jerzy Jakubowski, Secretary Dymitr Aleksandrow, and Treasurer Edmund Żera.^{10,16}

On January 15, 1950, at a meeting in Warsaw, 120 Polish cardiologists approved the creation of the section and composition of the board. Even then it was suggested that the section should be transformed into an independent cardiac society.^{10,16} The death of Mściwój Semerau-Siemianowski in 1953 delayed the implementation of the plan. His duties in the section were taken over by Jerzy Jakubowski.

Ultimately, Polish cardiologists established an independent cardiac association at the beginning of 1954. On February 27 and 28, 1954, a scientific conference of the Cardiology Section of PSIM was organized in the newly built lecture hall of the 2nd Department of Internal Medicine at the Medical Academy in Łódź and was focused on the achievements of Polish cardiac surgery. The first day (February 27) began with a remembrance of Mściwój Semerau-Siemianowski and 4 speeches were dedicated to his contribution to cardiology, then the main part of the conference began and 10 papers were presented and discussed. The following day, another 17 speeches were delivered and discussed, after which Jerzy Jakubowski summarized the meeting. The great significance of the conference lay in the lectures, and most of all, in the historic resolution, adopted on February 28, which transformed the Cardiology Section of PSIM into the Polish Cardiac Society (PCS).¹⁷

Beginnings of the Polish Cardiac Society (from 1954) February 28, 1954 can be considered as the symbolic date when the new organization was created. The official establishment of the PCS required a written statute and appropriate registration measures. Its first authorities

were the people previously involved in the Cardiology Section of PSIM. With the transformation of the section into an independent organization, the executive board was expanded. Jerzy Jakubowski, chairman (vice-chairman until 1953) of the Cardiology Section of PSIM, became president of the PCS; Leon Tochowicz became vice-president; Izabella Krzemińska-Ławkowiczowa, secretary; and Edmund Żera, treasurer (previously treasurer in the Cardiology Section of PSIM). Also, the following persons were appointed as members of the board: Zdzisław Askanas, Mieczysław Fejgin, Wiesław Markert, Włodzimierz Musiał, Klementyna Rachoń, Marian Tulczyński, and Stanisław Wszelaki. Soon, Mieczysław Gamski and Hugo and Zofia Kowarzyk were co-opted. The board in this composition served until November 22, 1963. Edmund Żera was president of the subsequent executive boards until 1972.¹⁰

In 1956, the PCS became a member of the European Society of Cardiology (ESC). Three representatives of the PCS entered the ESC Board: L. Tochowicz, E. Żera, and J. Jakubowski. Polish cardiologists began to take an active part in the ESC scientific conferences, for example, during congresses in Brussels (1958) and Rome (1960), where they delivered 10 presentations at each event.^{10,18}

Over the next years, the PCS significantly expanded its structures. Initially, the Society had no branches. Then the first was created in 1964, and a year later there were 6 in total.^{10,18,19} The first Board of the PCS adopted the principle that a general meeting of members would be organized once a year, each time in a different city, and the board itself would meet at least 3 times a year. They also stressed the importance of scientific conferences organized regularly by the society.¹⁰

A lot of information on the history of the PCS can be found on the society's official website. Also the first point of the current statute of the society touches on that history by mentioning the year of its creation (1954).²⁰

The first Polish publications and journals on cardiology

In Poland, the need to create a specialized cardiology journal was already recognized before 1939. Texts on cardiology were published in other journals, such as the *Polish Archives of Internal Medicine*, but the field was developing fast enough to produce numerous valuable articles. In 1939, Mściwój Semerau-Siemianowski started preparing 2 issues of a new quarterly, which was to be titled *Heart*, for print. Unfortunately, the outbreak of World War II made it impossible to complete his undertaking, and the collected materials were lost.

After the war, Mściwój Semerau-Siemianowski returned to the idea of creating a Polish cardiology journal. He managed to accomplish this

in the 1950s. The most important undertaking was the publication of the *Polish Heart Journal* (from 1957), which became the official periodical of the PCS. Soon, other publishing initiatives were underway.

Advances in Cardiology: a collective monograph devoted to cardiology (1952–1957) Before the publication of the *Polish Heart Journal*, the community of Polish cardiologists had agreed on the idea of issuing a collective monograph to facilitate the publication of expert texts on cardiology, which was implemented in 1952 under the title *Advances in Cardiology*. The first volume (FIGURE 1) was unique, as it was dedicated to Professor Mściwój Semerau-Siemianowski on the fortieth anniversary of the beginning of his medical career (he himself was the originator of this publishing project). Jerzy Jakubowski became editor-in-chief of the first volume and Dymitr Aleksandrow, Zdzisław Askanas, and Izabela

Krzemińska-Ławkowiczowa formed the editorial committee. The editorial team expressed their wish that Mściwój Semerau-Siemianowski would become editor-in-chief of the subsequent volumes, which was the case for volume 2 (1953), although he died before the publication. Again, Jerzy Jakubowski became editor-in-chief for volumes 3 (1954) and 4 (1956). Izabela Krzemińska-Ławkowiczowa was editor-in-chief for volume 5, which was the last published volume (1957).²¹

The title *Advances in Cardiology* itself indicated that the editors had a preference for papers that concerned the latest developments in cardiology, and most of them were indeed of such nature. The first volume consisted of 12 specialized articles as well as a text about Semerau-Siemianowski's professional and scientific achievements. Subsequent volumes contained fewer papers, from 6 to 11. In total, there were 43 texts in the 5 volumes, most of which had one author, only 3 were co-authored. Most of the texts were quite extensive and consisted of at least a dozen pages. Some of them were supplemented with illustrations such as photographs (especially X-rays), drawings, and engravings. All authors were Polish, and all articles were published in Polish. Apart from cardiologists, *Advances in Cardiology* was also addressed to physicians of other specializations, though the editors were in favor of texts that included expert findings without introductory content rather than those of a more general nature.²¹ The publication of *Advances in Cardiology* was discontinued because the *Polish Heart Journal*, issued since 1957, became a priority.

Polish Heart Journal: the periodical of the Cardiology Section of Polish Society of Internal Medicine (1954) The first issue (vol. 1, no. 1–2) of the *Polish Heart Journal* was published in 1954 (FIGURE 2). It became the official periodical of the Cardiology Section of PSIM. The next issue was published in 1955; however, the official year of publication was 1954 (vol. 1, no. 3–4). Although already dead at the time of the first issue, its originator and creator, Mściwój Semerau-Siemianowski, was listed as editor-in-chief of the journal. Jerzy Jakubowski held the position of editor-in-chief of the following issue, and Izabela Krzemińska-Ławkowiczowa was secretary for both issues.²²

The first issue of the *Polish Heart Journal* (vol. 1, no. 1–2) was quite impressive with a total of 20 articles. Similarly to *Advances in Cardiology*, all authors were Polish and papers were written in Polish. The editors decided that *Advances in Cardiology* and *Polish Heart Journal* would complement each other and that the number of valuable texts on cardiology in Poland was sufficient to publish the 2 titles at the same time. The great interest in cardiology was evidenced by around 50 to 60 original scientific papers delivered annually

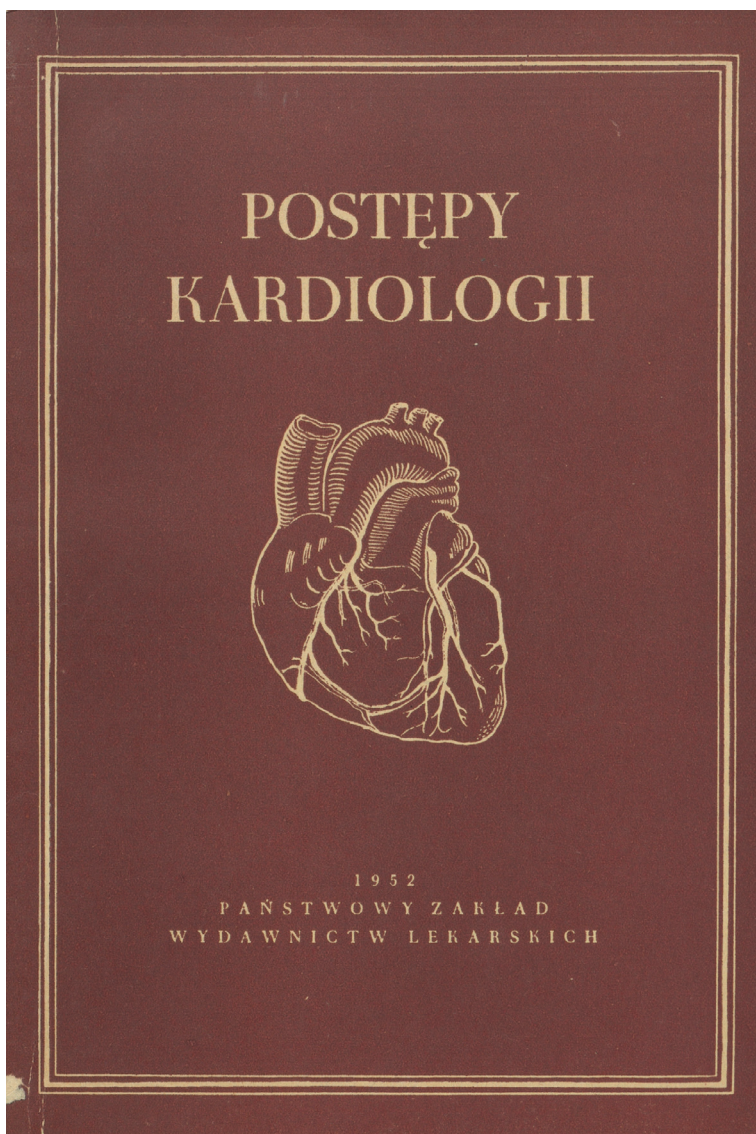


FIGURE 1 Cover of the *Advances in Cardiology* (*Postępy Kardiologii*), 1952

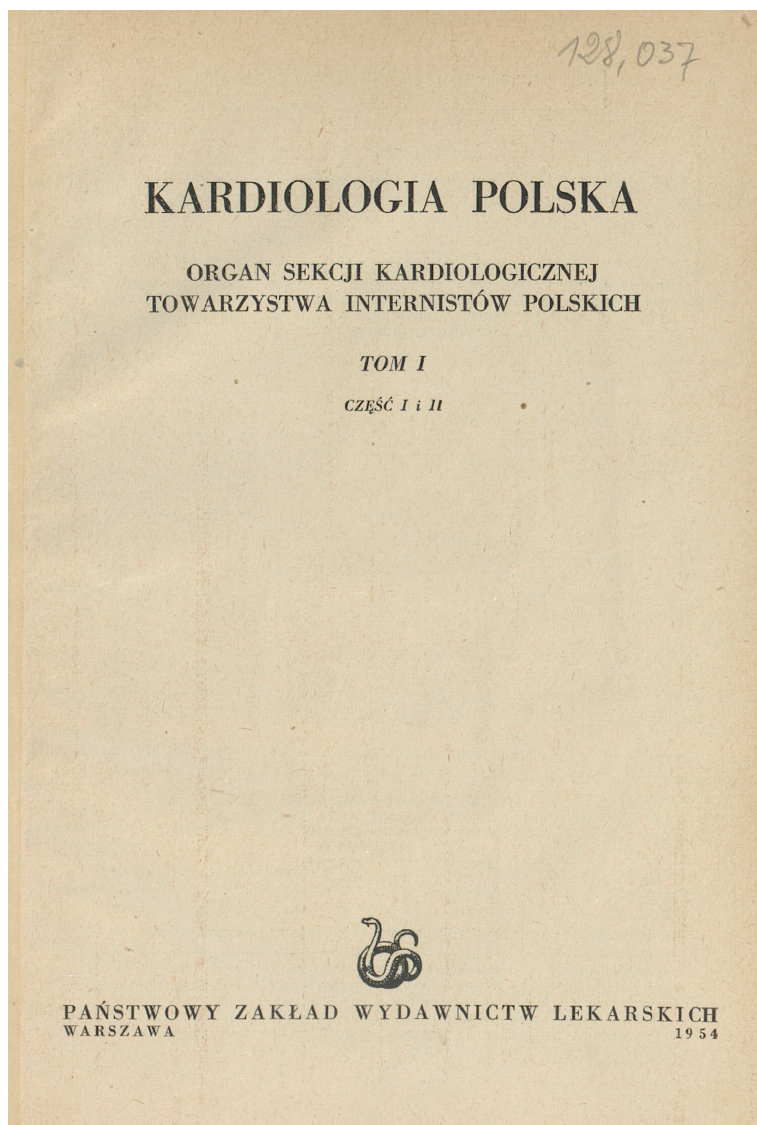


FIGURE 2 Title page of the *Polish Heart Journal* (*Kardiologia Polska*), 1954

during sessions of the Cardiology Section of PSIM. The sessions were held several times a year. An additional argument for the preparation of expert cardiology publications was the need to accumulate such texts in one place, and also to ensure faster publication of individual articles, so that they did not lose their relevance. The second issue of the *Polish Heart Journal* (vol. 1, no. 3–4) included papers presented at the cardiology conference that took place on February 27–28, 1954, at the Medical Academy in Łódź (mentioned above). The conference was of great scientific significance, and for cardiologists also important for another reason, as it was the place where a decision to create the PCS was made.²²

The editorial board decided that the *Polish Heart Journal* would be issued irregularly, depending on the needs. In total, only 2 volumes appeared. According to the originators' intention, the publication was a journal. It should be noted that before the first issue of the *Polish Heart Journal* in 1954, the community of Polish cardiologists

had managed to successfully implement other publishing initiatives in journals. In the early 1950s, for example, special issues of the *Polish Archives of Internal Medicine* and the *Polish Medical Weekly* were devoted exclusively to cardiology.²²

Polish Heart Journal: the official periodical of the Polish Cardiac Society (since 1957) The title *Polish Heart Journal* was reused in the journal that was first published 1957. The numbering suggested that, formally, it was a new journal. The 1957 issues were published as part of the first volume (FIGURE 3). The journal was published as a quarterly. The new *Polish Heart Journal* became the official periodical of the PCS, established in 1954. Jerzy Jakubowski held the position of editor-in-chief until 1965. In 1957, the first members of the editorial board were: Dymitr Aleksandrow (Warsaw), Zdzisław Askanas (Warsaw), Mieczysław Gamski (Lublin, Gdańsk), Zofia Kowarzykowa (Wrocław), Izabela Krzemińska-Ławkowiczowa (Warsaw), Włodzimierz Musiał (Łódź), Edward Szczeklik (Wrocław), and Leon Tochowicz (Kraków). The editorial office was located in Łódź at that time.²³

In the first issue of the journal (1957, issue 1–2), in the introductory article “From the Editor,” there was no direct reference to the previous, irregularly published *Polish Heart Journal*. However, there was a mention that a few years before, Mściwój Semerau-Siemianowski had made the first attempts to publish a cardiology journal. In the foreword, a wish was also expressed that the title would achieve “a prominent position among Polish medical journals.” The editorial board wanted the journal to become a link between the Polish and international cardiology, which posed a challenge as most texts were published in Polish. However, usually an abstract in English and Russian was included at the end of each paper published in Polish. Of the initial parts, issue number 1–2 (1957) was the most international. Most of the papers written by international authors were published in Polish, and the translations were probably made after submitting the texts to the editorial office in order to expand the audience in Poland. Some foreign papers in this issue were published in English.²³

It is worthwhile to list the topics discussed by the authors who submitted their texts to the first issues of the *Polish Heart Journal* (in the years 1957–1958).^{23,24} The articles, which were all published in Polish, included:

- “Functional and pathological anatomy of mitral orifice” by L. Manteuffel-Szoego and A. Piotrowski from Warsaw, the opening article in issue number 1–2, 1957, with a comprehensive abstract in English and a short one in Russian at the end
- “Electroencephalographic observations on cerebral anoxia due to cardiac surgery” by N. du Bouchet from Paris, France

- “Surgical treatment of mitral stenosis” by W. Gulajew from Moscow, USSR
- “Unilateral commissurotomy” by I. Boerema from Amsterdam, the Netherlands
- “Modern differential diagnosis of mitral valvular disease as compared with surgical findings” by M. Kučera from Hradec Králové, Czechoslovakia
- “Remarks on the surgical treatment of mitral stenosis” by W. Bross, E. Szczeklik, S. Koczowska, A. Kustrzycki, and J. Masior from Wrocław
- “Indications to the surgical treatment of congenital abnormalities of the heart” by J. Moll from Poznań
- “Cardiovascular abnormalities in Marfan’s syndrome” by L. Cholewa and A. Kulig from Kraków
- “A simple spatial model visualizing the vectorcardiogram” by M. Gamski from Lublin.

In 1957 and 1958, 5 issues of the *Polish Heart Journal* were published. The largest number of articles, 21, was included in the double issue number 1–2 (1957) and the smallest number, 8, in issue number 4 (1958). Each of the articles usually contained over a dozen references. Most of the texts had 1 or 2 authors. Apart from the regular articles (most of which were original articles, and in issue 1 also reports from the Congress of Thoracic Surgery) all issues also included permanent sections, namely, Review of Cardiology Literature and Abstracts. Some issues included reviews of books and reports on important cardiology events, for example, in issue number 2 (1958) there was a report from the 15th session of the PCS, while in issue number 4 (1958), a report from the Third World Congress of Cardiology. Similarly to *Advances in Cardiology* and the *Polish Heart Journal* of 1954, some articles were complemented with illustrations such as photographs, drawings, and engravings.²⁴ The circulation of the *Polish Heart Journal* grew rapidly. In the years 1957 to 1960, it increased from 260 to 850 copies.¹⁰

Personal profiles of the creators of the Polish Cardiac Society and the first Polish cardiology journal

Mściwój Semerau-Siemianowski (1885–1953), was born in Ruse, Bulgaria. In 1911, he received his doctoral degree in medicine at the University of Strasbourg, where, until 1918, he held the position of assistant at the Faculty of Medicine. In the years 1918 to 1935, he was employed at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Warsaw, where, in 1929, he became titular professor. Except that, from 1924, he headed the Internal Diseases Ward at St. Lazarus Hospital in Warsaw. It was the first ward in Poland to specialize in cardiology. Some of Semerau-Siemianowski’s cardiology studies were considered pioneer on the international scientific scene. During World War II, he worked at St. Lazarus Hospital (from 1942), was involved in underground university teaching, engaged in helping Jews, and took part in the Warsaw Uprising (during which he lost his 2 sons). After the war, he was professor at the University of Łódź, then at the Medical Academy in Gdańsk, and, from 1948, at the University of Warsaw, where he held the 2nd Chair and Department of Internal Medicine. During that time, he made several scientific trips to Sweden, Denmark, Great Britain, and Italy. He was known for being fluent in several languages. In Warsaw, in addition to his professional work, he provided training for physicians in the field of cardiology and electrocardiography. In the years 1931 to 1936, and 1949 to 1951, he was president of the PSIM (FIGURE 4).^{15,25-31}

Jerzy Jakubowski (1887–1967), was born in Warsaw (as Jerzy Muszkatlenblit). In his youth

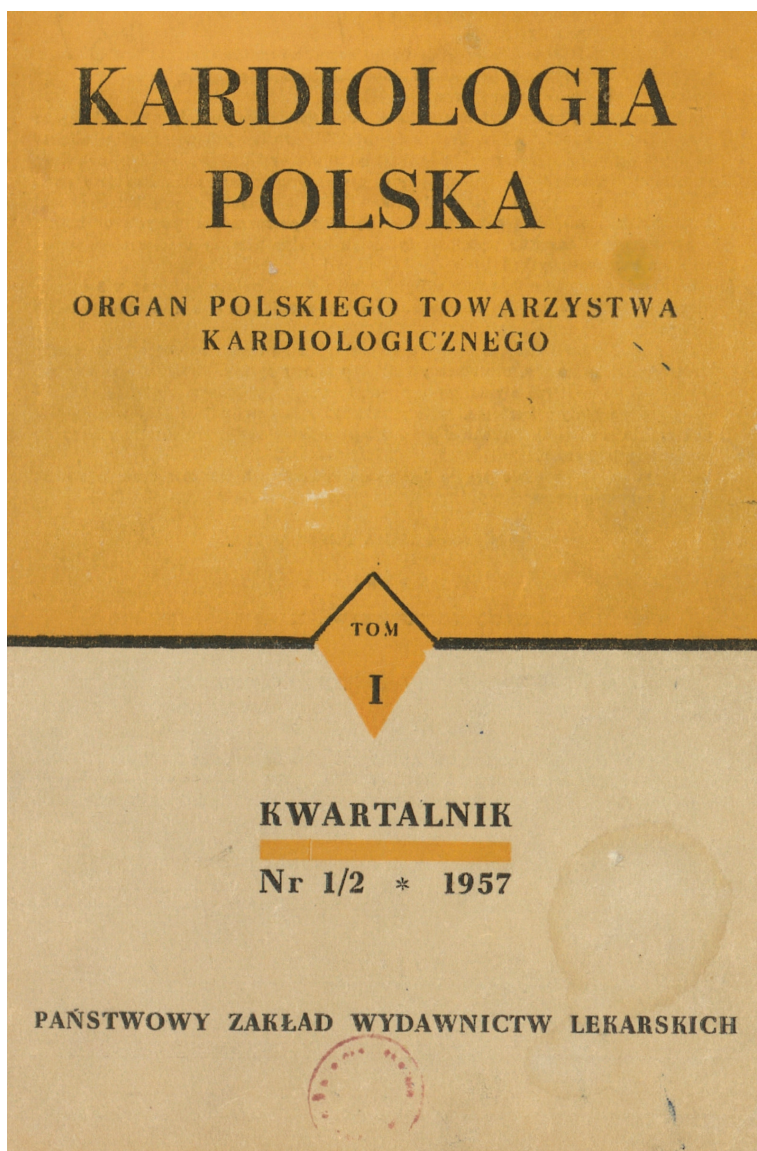


FIGURE 3 Cover of the *Polish Heart Journal (Kardiologia Polska)*, 1957

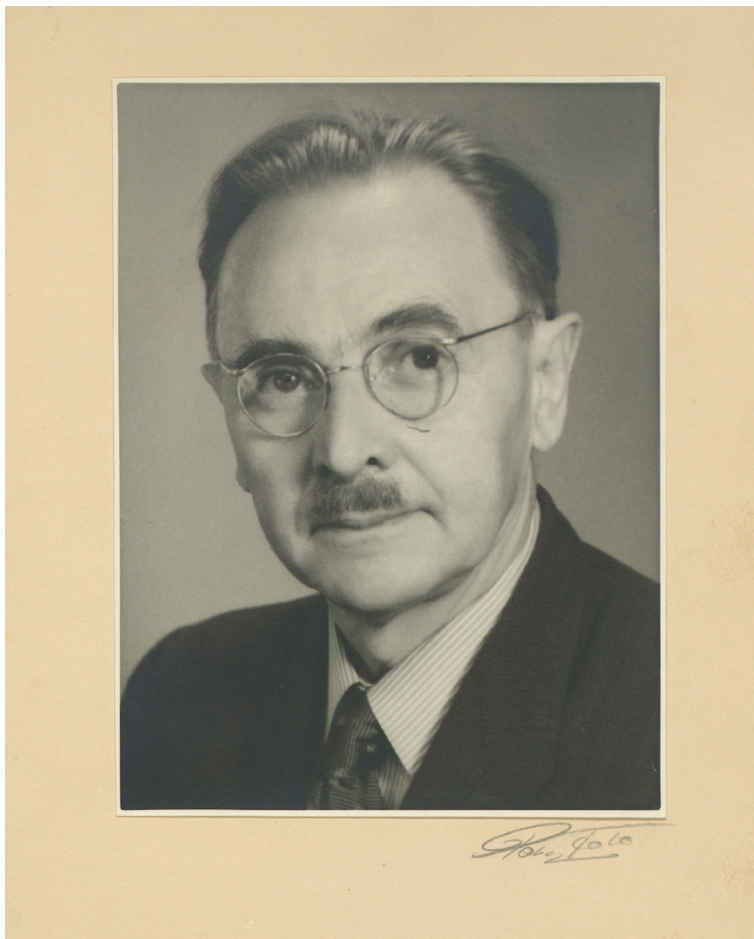


FIGURE 4 Mściwój Semerau-Siemianowski (photo courtesy of the Central Medical Library in Warsaw, Poland)

he was active in leftist organizations, for which he was deported to Russia. He managed to escape and take medical studies in Paris, France. In the following years, he was still politically active. In the interwar period, he ran a private medical practice. In September 1939, during the war, he was a military doctor. After World War II, he became professor at the University of Łódź, where, until 1963, he headed the 2nd Department of Internal Medicine. He was the first president of the PCS and the first editor-in-chief of the *Polish Heart Journal*.^{32,33}

Leon Tochowicz (1897–1965) was born in Igolomia, near Kraków. He took part in the 1920 Polish-Bolshevik war. In 1926, he received his doctoral degree at Jagiellonian University and was employed at the 1st Department of Internal Medicine of Jagiellonian University, initially as assistant, then, in 1938, became docent. In September 1939, Tochowicz was engaged in the war. In November 1939, he was arrested by the Germans and together with a group of employees of Jagiellonian University taken to a concentration camp in Sachsenhausen. Released in 1940, he worked as a physician in Kraków. After the war, he was employed at Jagiellonian University again, where, in 1947, he became professor and the head of the 1st Department of Internal Medicine. In the years

1957–1965, he was the rector of the Medical Academy in Kraków. Tochowicz is considered the creator of the Kraków school of cardiology.^{34–37}

Dymitr Aleksandrow (1909–1993) was born in Piotrków Trybunalski. In 1935, he graduated as a doctor of medicine from the University of Warsaw. In 1939, he was engaged in the war. During World War II, he worked as a physician in Warsaw, provided underground university teaching, and participated in the Warsaw Uprising. After the war, he defended his doctoral dissertation (1945) and worked as assistant at the 2nd Department of Internal Medicine at the University of Warsaw. From 1953, he was professor and head of the 2nd Department of Internal Medicine at Medical Academy in Warsaw. In 1964, he was employed as professor at Military Medical Academy in Warsaw and became general in 1967.^{38,39}

Edmund Żera (1899–1993) was born in Warsaw. He took part in the 1920 Polish-Bolshevik war. He received his doctoral degree in medicine at the University of Warsaw in 1925. After graduation, he worked under the supervision of Mściwój Semerau-Siemianowski at the Internal Medicine Ward at St. Lazarus Hospital in Warsaw and other Warsaw hospitals, he also pursued further studies abroad. During World War II, he was head of the Internal Diseases Ward at the St. Roch Hospital in Warsaw. In the years 1936 to 1939 and 1945 to 1947, he was secretary of the PSIM, then treasurer until 1951. From 1948, he headed the Circulatory Diseases Ward at Hospital No. 6 in Warsaw. In 1954, the ward was transformed into the Cardiology Department operating at the Institute for Development and Specialization of Medical Staff at the Medical Academy in Warsaw. The Cardiology Department was the first institution in Poland with the term ‘cardiology’ included in its name.^{40,41}

Izabela Krzemińska-Ławkowiczowa (1909–1999) was born in Warsaw. In 1934, she graduated as a doctor of medicine from the University of Warsaw. She was the commander of a dressing station during the 1944 Warsaw Uprising. In 1948, together with Mściwój Semerau-Siemianowski, she organized a cardiac catheterization laboratory at the 2nd Department of Internal Medicine of the University of Warsaw, and the same year together they carried out the first right heart catheterization in Poland. In the following years, she was professor at the Institute of Hematology in Warsaw. In terms of scientific research, she worked closely with her husband, a hematologist, Professor Włodzimierz Ławkowicz.^{32,42}

ARTICLE INFORMATION

CONFLICT OF INTEREST None declared.

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