

# Professor Zdzisława Kornacewicz-Jach (1950–2020)

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It is a great honor for me to write this memorial article devoted to Professor Zdzisława Kornacewicz-Jach (FIGURE 1), on behalf of the Working Group on Woman Heart Diseases (Sekcja Chorób Serca u Kobiet) of the Polish Cardiac Society. I had the pleasure to cooperate with Zdzisława (also known among closer associates as “Dzidka”) for many years—she also was a friend of mine.

Professor Kornacewicz-Jach was born on April 15, 1950 in Słupsk. She graduated from the faculty of medicine of Pomeranian Medical Academy of Szczecin. In 1979, she obtained a doctoral degree in medical sciences based on a dissertation entitled *Hemodynamics of coronary embolism in a dog*. In 1987, through her previous work and habilitation thesis entitled *Research on mitral valve prolapse syndrome with a particular emphasis on angiographic studies*, she acquired the title of an associate professor of medical sciences. In 1996, she became a full professor.

Between the years 1981 and 1983, as a French government scholarship holder, she was a member of the Postdoctoral Fellowship at Collège de Médecine des Hôpitaux de Paris, at the Department of Cardiology in Hôpital Boucicaut, headed by Dr Gerbaux. There, she studied invasive cardiology (coronary angiography, cardiac catheterization, and electrophysiology). She had the privilege to assist Professor Andreas Grüntzig himself, “the father of coronary angioplasty,” during innovative interventional cardiology procedures conducted in Paris. Work in the Parisian hospital had an enormous impact on her further career and determined her decision to become an invasive cardiologist. She completed several other fellowships in Sweden and the Netherlands, among others, where she had an opportunity to gain further experience in invasive cardiology.



**FIGURE 1** Professor Zdzisława Kornacewicz-Jach in 2006 (courtesy of the Department of Cardiology of Pomeranian Medical University in Szczecin)

Professor Kornacewicz-Jach brought her impressive experience and knowledge on interventional cardiology to the Department of Cardiology in Szczecin, where she established both the Hemodynamic Laboratory and the Electrophysiology Laboratory from the ground up. Between 1993 and 2018, she was the head of the Cardiology Department of Pomeranian Medical Academy of Szczecin, later Pomeranian Medical University. In 1997, together with another outstanding cardiologist, Professor Hubert Seggewiss, she performed the (first in Poland)

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procedure of alcohol septal ablation in hypertrophic cardiomyopathy.

Invasive cardiology was truly her greatest passion. She founded and organized a modern cardiology center in the Pomeranian region with interventional cardiology, electrophysiology, echocardiography, and intensive cardiology care units. She personally educated generations of doctors in the field of coronary invasive procedures. She supervised research careers leading to associate and full professor positions of many renowned cardiologists, including Robert Gil as well as Jarosław Kaźmierczak, Edyta Płońska-Gościński, Jarosław Gorący, Andrzej Wojtarowicz, and Małgorzata Peregud-Pogorzelska, who continue her research endeavors and work of life.

Professor Kornacewicz-Jach was highly active in the Polish Cardiac Society (PCS), being a member of the Main Board for 4 terms. She organized several cardiology conferences, both scientific and training, and the National PCS Congress in Szczecin in 1993.

She was also immensely involved in the activities of the Working Group on Woman Heart Diseases of the PCS, which she coestablished with Jadwiga Kłoś, MD, PhD, the initiator of the section. For 2 terms, she served as the chair of the aforementioned division. Additionally, she was a coeditor of monographs on cardiac diseases in women.

Professor Kornacewicz-Jach was an icon of our Working Group on Woman Heart Diseases, constantly inspiring its members to accept challenges presented to them and realize their full potential. For her outstanding scientific and didactic achievements in the field of cardiology in women, she was awarded the section statuette.

She also cooperated with the Polish Society of Gynecology and the Polish Menopause and Andropause Society in developing position statements on the impact of hormone replacement therapy on the cardiovascular system. She developed and published as a first author the following works: *Polish forum for prevention guidelines on cardiovascular diseases prevention in women*<sup>1</sup> and *Joint position statement of the Polish Gynaecological Society, the Polish Cardiac Society and the Polish Menopause and Andropause Society on the effect of postmenopausal hormone replacement therapy on the cardiovascular system*.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, she was active in the Polish Society for Atherosclerosis Research, of which she became an honorary member in 2009.

Professor Kornacewicz-Jach supervised 26 doctoral degrees, oversaw 7 research careers leading to the associate professor position, reviewed 21 habilitation theses and 12 proceedings for the title of professor of medical sciences. For her extraordinary merits in teaching and education, she received a medal from the Commission of National Education. Her own research included over 170 publications. She authored and coauthored multiple textbooks and textbook chapters. Her scientific

interest focused mainly on invasive cardiology, electrophysiology, and specifically the woman's heart. For her overall scientific, didactic, and educational achievements, she was honored with numerous awards granted by the Rector of the Pomeranian Medical University and by the Minister of Health. Between 2005 and 2008, Professor Kornacewicz-Jach was also Vice-Rector for Clinical Affairs of Pomeranian Medical University.

She was a member of editorial boards of several journals, particularly of *Kardiologia Polska (Kardiol Pol, Polish Heart Journal)*, with which she cooperated for many years as a member of the Scientific Council of the National Scientific Board. She was also a reviewer and an author of fascinating editorials, eagerly read by practicing physicians as well.

Professor Kornacewicz-Jach was strongly involved in popularizing and promoting health education. Among other activities, she helped to prepare programs broadcast on Polish Radio Szczecin, such as *In the rhythm of the heart* devoted to health promotion and problems related to cardiovascular diseases in women.

Zdzisława was continuously wrapped up in work, often to the point of exhaustion. In private calls, while under the burden of writing numerous reviews and articles, she often said to me: "And what would I do without it? It's my life after all." Indeed, cardiology was her greatest passion and always at the heart of her life. Privately, she loved fast cars and long journeys and travelled the world with her husband Krzysztof. In everyday life, she charmed everyone with grace, elegance, profound understanding, and comprehensive knowledge.

For the last 2 years, illness made clinical work impossible for her. In June 2020, Professor Zdzisława Kornacewicz-Jach, an outstanding figure in Polish cardiology, an expert in her field, a humanist doctor, a lover of the arts, and a dear friend to many of us—passed away. We will remember her as the great Lady of Polish cardiology.

## ARTICLE INFORMATION

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