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Leading figures in Polish Nephrology. Part II — Dr. Sławomir Bautembach

ABSTRACT

Following the example of the series of publications on honorary members of the Polish Society of Nephrology, in the second issue of Forum Nefrologiczne published in 2021, we launched a new series titled “Meritorious to Polish Nephrology,” which is a title awarded under the statute of the Society. The first figure presented was Dr. Zbigniew Fałda, one of the pioneers of dialysis treatment in Poland and a member of the team that performed Warsaw’s first hemodialysis session in 1959. In this article, we set to shed light on Sławomir Bautembach, Ph.D., who sadly passed away in 2021.

Although not a medical doctor, he worked for the Medical Academy in Gdańsk, cooperated with the Clinic of Renal Diseases, held the position of the Academy’s administrative director, and closely cooperated with the National Coordinator for the Development of Dialysis Treatment. Consequently, it must be said that his input in the development of nephrology, and especially dialysis treatment in Poland, though different than that of dr. Fałda’s, was still significant.

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The authors present the second part of the series entitled “Leading figures in Polish nephrology,” which was initiated in the previous issue of Forum Nefrologiczne. The first part of the series was devoted to Dr. Zbigniew Fałda, an excellent physician and one of the pioneers of dialysis in Poland. In this issue, we are presenting the figure of Sławomir Bautembach, a doctor of natural sciences, whose contribution to the development of nephrology in Poland was also extremely significant [1].

Sławomir Bautembach was born in Gdynia on September 26, 1947. His father, Leonard Bautembach, was an officer at the Customs Office in Gdynia while his mother Irena devoted herself to housekeeping and education of children. Sławomir Bautembach completed his primary and secondary education in the town of Gdynia. As a young man, he wanted to become an actor. His love for books was well known; he was also a skilled poetry reciter and a winner of numerous recitation competitions throughout the Pomeranian region. Starting from the primary-school age and continuing for 20 years, he was an altar server at St. Anthony’s Church

at the St. Maximilian Hill in Gdynia. He could also play the trumpet (Fig. 1) [2].

Despite his interest in humanities, he enrolled in the Teacher Education School, from which he graduated with a master’s degree in physics in 1969, having defended a thesis titled “Methods for the measurement of the activity of tritium.” After graduation, he spent his first years of professional life as a teacher in the Secondary Technical School of Mechanical Engineering in Malbork. In 1973, he was employed at the Department and Chair of Physics and Biophysics of the Medical Academy in Gdańsk (MAG) headed by Prof. Józef Terlecki and followed a career path from research assistant to assistant professor and senior lecturer. In 1981, he defended his Ph.D. dissertation titled “Non-invasive examination of electric permittivity of intracellular substances” to obtain a degree of Doctor of Philosophy in natural sciences. His scientific interests also included issues directly related to nephrology. Dr. Bautembach was involved in close collaboration with the Clinic of Renal Diseases and subsequently the Clinic of Nephrology, Trans-

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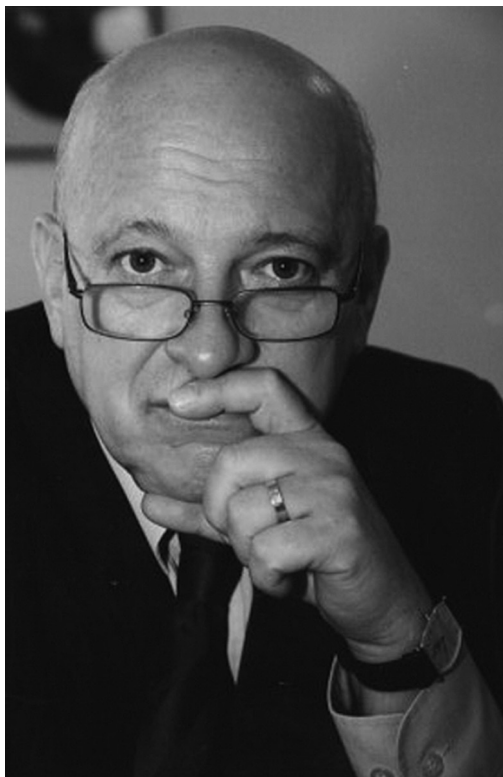


Figure 1. Doctor Sławomir Bautembach (courtesy of Joanna Bautembach)

plantology, and Internal Medicine. His studies in the area included characterization of erythrocytes in healthy subjects and renally impaired patients using bioimpedance measurements; both groups were found to differ significantly in this respect. Dr. Bautembach's subsequent studies made use of isotopic techniques to demonstrate correlations between changes in

the lipid layer of erythrocytic membranes with the stage of renal insufficiency. Other studies focused on changes occurring within the erythrocytes as caused by erythropoietin, a novel medication introduced for the treatment of anemia in renal failure. All of these were novel studies presented at national and international symposia and used as the basis for subsequent publication in *Studia Biophysica* — a journal of international range (Fig. 2) [3].

In 1987, Dr. Sławomir Bautembach became the administrative director of the MAG and continued to hold this position until September 2005. His contribution to the development of nephrology continued throughout that time. When a possibility arose to obtain funds from the Ministry of Health for the purchase of the above-mentioned erythropoietin, Dr. Bautembach offered the Academy's involvement as the main agent in the tender and the development of a system for the distribution of the drug to dialysis centers across the country. The experience gained in the process was subsequently used in central purchases of dialysis equipment and disposables. All of this was done as part of the successive stages of the Program for the Advancement and Development of Dialysis Therapy in Poland designed, among others, by prof. Bolesław Rutkowski. Many of us had the privilege of witnessing the dynamic development of dialysis therapy, which eventually became available to all patients who needed it. Doctor Bautembach was also a co-author of the annual *Reports on the State of Dialysis Therapy and Renal Transplantation in Poland* (Fig. 3, 4) [4].

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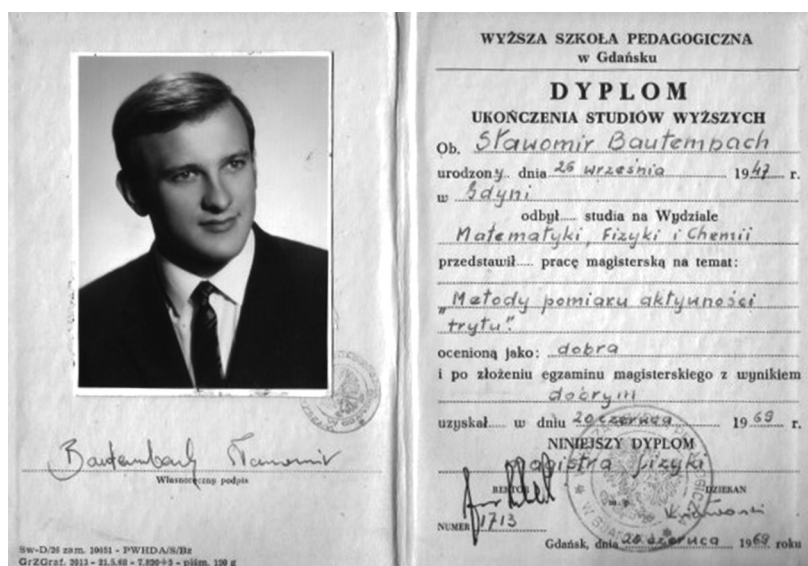


Figure 2. College graduation diploma (courtesy of Joanna Bautembach)

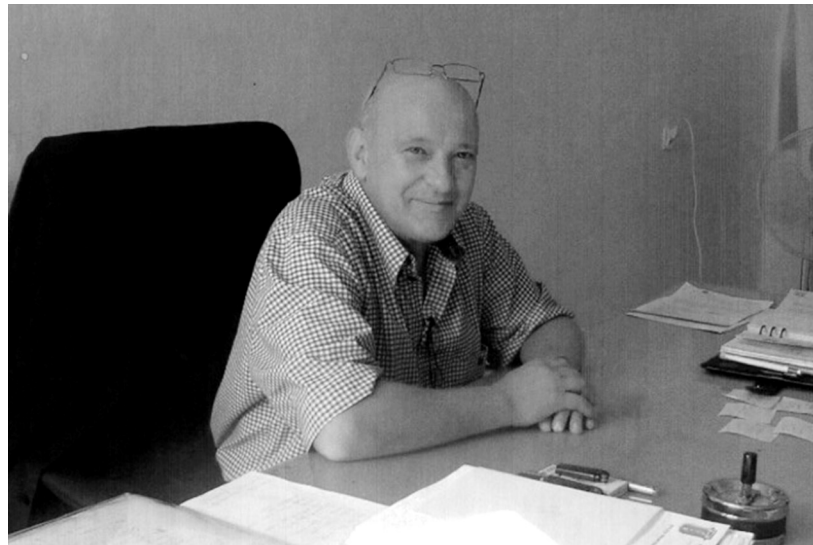


Figure 3. Sławek at his desk (courtesy of Joanna Bautembach)

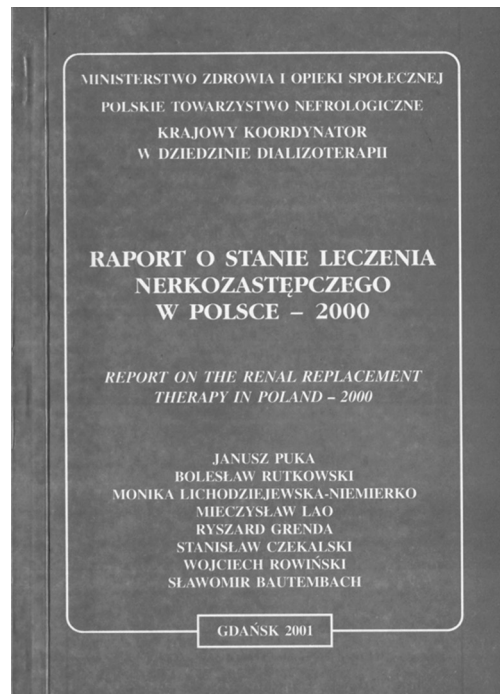


Figure 4. Title page of the *Report on the of Renal Replacement Therapy in Poland – 2000*

▶▶ He was also an adviser at Diaverum, a company offering a wide range of renal replacement therapies, which turned out to be another of his fruitful contributions to the development of nephrology and dialysis therapy in Poland ◀◀

Dr. Bautembach's term of office as the administrative director was marked by events such as incorporation of the Institute for Maritime and Tropical Medicine into the Academy's structure, the launching of the Institute for Radiology and Radiation Therapy featuring the state-of-the-art diagnostic equipment, establishing the Clinic of Hematology as the first bone marrow transplantation center in northern Poland, the revitalization of the Institute of Cardiology and modernization of the

Department of Anatomy, refurbishment and launching of the Peritoneal Dialysis Unit, etc. The engagement of Dr. Bautembach was very important for all these projects [5].

In his adult life, Dr. Sławomir Bautembach held numerous other important functions. In 1980, together with prof. Bolesław Rutkowski, he was a co-organizer of the academic strike committee. The collected demands of the academic community were delivered to the Gdańsk Shipyard. He was also involved in the activities of the Healthcare Professionals' Trade Union. All these activities could not be hampered by Dr. Bautembach's left-wing beliefs and membership in the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR). At the turn of the centuries, Dr. Bautembach was a member of the Ministry of Health's Group of Experts on the Purchases of Medical Equipment, the Ministry of Health's Committee for Clinical Hospitals, the Chairman of the Board of the Regional Medical Register of Pomerania, and a member of the Social Council of the Pomeranian National Health Fund Division.

After leaving the Academy, he served as a vice-president of the DORACO construction corporation and later as the president of the DORACO Developing company. He was also an adviser at Diaverum, a company offering a wide range of renal replacement therapies, which turned out to be another of his fruitful contributions to the development of nephrology and dialysis therapy in Poland [6].

Dr. Bautembach was the author or co-author of a total of 102 scientific reports and articles, congress communications and pre-



Figure 5. Dr. Sławomir Bautembach, pictured first from the right, at the 10th IAHN Congress in Wieniec-Zdrój in 2017 (photo: Janusz Ostrowski)

sentations, academic textbooks and handbook chapters, as well as the previously mentioned *Reports on the status of Renal Replacement Therapy in Poland*. His most important publications include chapters in textbooks titled “*Dializoterapia w praktyce klinicznej*” (Dialysis Therapy in Clinical Practice), “*Standardy postępowania w rozpoznawaniu i leczeniu chorób nerek*” (Procedural Standards for the Diagnostics and Treatment of Renal Diseases), and “*Erythropoetyna — od odkrycia do zastosowań klinicznych*” (Erythropoietin — from Discovery to Clinical Applications). Dr. Bautembach took part in numerous national and international scientific conferences (Fig. 5).

He received numerous awards and distinctions for his significant scientific and professional achievements. He received seven third-degree individual awards from the Minister of Health and Social Welfare, the first-degree individual award from the Minister of Health and Social Welfare in 1981, as well as eleven individual awards from the Rector of the Medical Academy in Gdańsk. His distinctions include the Golden Cross of Merit, the Bronze Cross of Merit, and the title of Meritorious for the Medical Academy in Gdańsk. Dr. Bautembach received the title of “Meritorious for Polish Nephrology” at the 17th PTN Conference held in Poznań in 2008 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the first hemodialysis in Poland. He received this distinction together with Dr. Fałda and other laureates.

In 1968, Dr. Sławomir Bautembach married Irena Rogowska, a mathematician, the



Figure 6. On holiday with Irena (courtesy of Paulina Bautembach-Koberda)

head of the Independent Laboratory of Mathematics and Biostatistics of the Medical Academy in Gdansk, who passed away in 2016 after 48 years of marriage. The Bautembach family had two daughters, Joanna, a physician, and Paulina, a dentist (Fig. 6).

Doctor Sławomir Bautembach passed away after a long and severe illness on February 13, 2021. On 19 February 2021, he was buried at the Leszczyński Municipal Cemetery

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in Gdynia next to his beloved wife. His friends and colleagues shall remember him as an exceptionally active, smiling, friendly and helpful

person. We miss Dr. Sławomir Bautembach, for many of us simply Sławek, and the moments we shared.

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