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## Professor dr hab. Andrzej Nowakowski — a supporter of Poznań rheumatology



It is with great sadness that I feel obliged to inform you that on 29 December 2021 a friend, a member of the Scientific Council of the Rheumatology Forum, Professor dr hab.

Andrzej Nowakowski passed away. An outstanding humanist doctor, a man who knew more than anyone about diseases of the spine. We had arranged with Andrzej for a series of publications in the Forum on this subject, but, alas...

Professor Andrzej Nowakowski was born on 19 December 1948 in Czarnków on the Noteć river into a medical family. He received his medical degree from the Faculty of Medicine of the Poznan Medical University in 1973 and began working at the Department of Orthopaedics of the Poznan University, initially as an assistant, then senior assistant, assistant professor and, since 2005, Head of the Department of Spine Surgery, Oncologic Orthopaedics and Traumatology at the Poznan University of Medical Sciences. He obtained his first- and second-degree specialisations in orthopaedics and trauma surgery in 1976 and 1979, respectively. He was conferred with the degree of Doctor of Medical Sciences in 1982. In 2004, he obtained a postdoctoral degree in medicine.

In the years of the political breakthrough, he founded the Independent and Self-Governing Trade Union „Solidarity (NSZZ „Solidarność”) of Healthcare Services” in Poznań. In

the period from 13.12.1981 until 04.06.1989 he was an opposition activist in the structures of the underground NSZZ „Solidarność” trade union. From 1.12.1981 until June 1989, he was the Chairman of the outlawed Institutional Committee of the NSZZ „Solidarność” of the State Clinical Hospital No. 4 in Poznań (he was the Chairman of the Institutional Committee until January 1999). He coordinated and provided medical assistance to hundreds of people connected with „Solidarity”, people hiding from the communist Security Service, families of those interned and arrested, and many others in need. From 1982 to 1989, he was the medical coordinator for donations sent to Poland from France and other Western European countries to Poznań. He was active in charity work led by Father Stanisław Kałek, director of the Priests’ Retirement Home in Poznań. Medical equipment and other medical donations were sent directly to various medical facilities. In 1982 he was dismissed from the Poznan Medical University and reinstated in 1983, after an appeal to the General Council for Science and Higher Education. During martial law, as an academic teacher, he was under particular surveillance by the Security Service, harassed, withdrawn from teaching students and detained by the communist police.

In 1990–1991 he was a John H. Moe Spine Fellow at the Twin Cities Scoliosis Spine Center, Division of Spine Surgery, Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, USA, where he published two monographs — *Kyphosis* (1990) and *Spine Cord Tumors* (1991).

Together with his team, he implanted the first intervertebral disc prosthesis in Poland in

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the cervical and lumbar spine (2002). Member of the development project team in cooperation with the Warsaw University of Technology and the Poznan Institute of Metal Forming, developing the first Polish intervertebral disc prosthesis.

For many years, Head of the Spinal Surgery Department of the Wiktor Dega Orthopaedic and Rehabilitation Clinical Hospital in Poznań, and also its Director for 10 years. During this period, on the initiative of prof. Nowakowski, a lot of modernisation and ongoing work was carried out throughout the Hospital. The Central Sterilisation Room and rooms of the X-ray Laboratory were modernised, neglected rooms of the Administration and the Pharmacy were renovated, the historic staircase in the A wing was renovated and rooms in the former flat of Professor Dega were adapted to serve as administrative offices. The Hospital Chapel was refurbished and equipped. In 2000, the entrance to the Orthopaedics Building from the side of the Hospital Park was renovated, the ramp leading from the entrance for wheelchairs was renovated, or actually built from scratch, and the historic fountain near the entrance was restored. On the initiative of the Hospital Director and the Wilda Estate Council, the statue of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception was restored, which together with the plinth (3.4 m high) is now 5 m high. The statue was moved to a new, more central location in the Hospital Park (between the „Swedish House” and the eastern wall of the Orthopaedics Building).

From 21 to 23 May 2007, Under the auspices of the Polish Society of Orthopaedics and Traumatology and on the initiative of Professor Nowakowski, an International Conference of the Polish Spine Society was organised. The leading topics of the Conference were spinal deformities, degenerative changes, spinal tumours and inflammatory processes. During this Conference, we awarded the first medal of the Polish Spine Society to Professor Hilary Koprowski of Philadelphia (USA), the creator of the Polio vaccine.

In 2018, President Andrzej Duda awarded Dr Nowakowski the title of professor. On this occasion, Professor Nowakowski handed to the President a commemorative book „100 lat Ortopedii Polskiej” („100 years of Polish Orthopaedics”) and said: — Mr President, two things have certainly worked for us in the Wielkopolska Region: Uprising and Orthopaedics.

Member of the Board of the Polish Society of Orthopaedics and Traumatology (PTOiTr) since 2006 and its honorary member since 2021. Editor-in-Chief of „Chirurgia Narządów Ruchu i Ortopedia Polska” — „Polish Orthopaedics and Traumatology” — the official journal of PTOiTr. Co-founder and editor of the monograph series „Biblioteka Ortopedyczna i Traumatologiczna” („Library of Orthopaedics and Traumatology”). President of the Spondyloorthopaedic Section of the PTOiTr (2 terms) and President of the Polish Spine Society. Chancellor of the Wiktor Dega PTOiTr Medal Chapter for many years. The originator of the Ireneusz Wierzejewski jubilee medal for the 100th anniversary of Polish Orthopaedics. The originator of the jubilee meeting on the anniversary of Konrad Biesalski’s birth in Ostróda. Author and editor of: anniversary edition of the book „100 lat Ortopedii Polskiej (1913–2013) („100 years of Polish Orthopaedics (1913–2013))”, „Almanach Ortopedów Polskich” („Almanac of Polish Orthopaedists”), textbook for students „Ortopedia i traumatologia” („Orthopaedics and traumatology”), „Ortopedyczno-Rehabilitacyjny Szpital Kliniczny im. Wiktora Degi Uniwersytetu Medycznego w panoramie historycznej Poznania (1868–2018)” („Wiktor Dega Orthopaedic and Rehabilitation Clinical Hospital at the Medical University in the historical panorama of Poznań (1868–2018))”, „Podręcznik dla lekarzy specjalizujących się w ortopedii i traumatologii narządu ruchu” („Handbook for doctors specialising in orthopaedics and traumatology of the musculoskeletal system”) and many others. He initiated the establishment of the Museum of Polish Orthopaedics and Traumatology in Poznań and was its first curator.

Awarded the „Wiktor Dega Medal” and the „Adam Gruca Medal” of the Polish Society of Orthopaedics and Traumatology. On 13 December 2021, at the request of the President of the Institute of National Remembrance, by decision of the President of the Republic of Poland, he was awarded the „Cross of Freedom and Solidarity” for his merits in activities for independence and sovereignty of Poland and respect for human rights in the People’s Republic of Poland.

Supervisor and mentor to many generations of orthopaedic and traumatology doctors. Bibliophile, erudite and above all a very good Man — a faithful and empathetic friend to the sick and needy. On 19 June 2021, he suffered a serious car accident. He died after more than six months of hospital treatment.

In addition to the merits of Professor Andrzej Nowakowski cited above, particularly for Polish and world orthopaedics and traumatology, it should be added that he played a key role in the preservation of academic rheumatology in Poznań. At the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, Poznań rheumatology had reached a crossroads. The long-standing mission of the J. Struś Hospital in Szkolna Street came to an end and the Rheumatology Department functioning within its structures was moved to the hospital in Szwajcarska Street, but no longer with the status of a Department. At that time, as the then director of the W. Dega State Clinical Hospital No 4, he reacted constructively to the initiative of the University authorities, which resulted in the formation of the Rehabilitation and Rheumatology Department, later transformed into the Chair and Department of Rheumatology and Internal Medicine organised and headed by prof. Irena Zimmermann-Górska. In 2003, on the initiative of Professor

Tomasz Opala, Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, and the undersigned, and with the approval of Director Andrzej Nowakowski, in the building known as the „Swedish House”, by the decision of the Senate of the Medical University, the Department of Physiotherapy and Rheumatology was established whose beds were used for the implementation of the contract for rheumatology services. These two important decisions undoubtedly laid the foundations for the current Department of Rheumatology, Rehabilitation and Internal Medicine with its modern department for biological treatment and clinical research.

We say goodbye to our friend. A great doctor, man and humanist, a lover of Provence, Russian poetry and literature and brand cigars. I will never forget the jubilee of his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday at the „Młyńskie Koło”, the unforgettable staging by his friends from Teatr Nowy in Poznań and Andrzej reading with emotion texts by Mikhail Bułhakow, also a doctor.

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