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## History of rheumatology. Foundation of the Polish Society for Rheumatology

Rheumatic diseases have accompanied mankind from the earliest times. This is evidenced by paleorheumatological investigations revealing the putative occurrence of some rheumatic diseases thousands of years ago [1–3]. These findings are based on excavated human skeletons and mummies. Significant findings indicate the common occurrence of ankylosing spondylitis in antiquity [4–8]. Moreover, changes evidencing the occurrence of rheumatic diseases have already been found in the skeletons of dinosaurs [9, 10]. The oldest medical manuscripts confirm putative recognition of rheumatic diseases. There are quite a lot of descriptions of symptoms and signs of diseases related to the musculoskeletal system in the antique collection of writings known as the *Corpus Hippocraticum* [11]. Additionally, I would like to add that the *Corpus Hippocraticum* is not a collection of Hippocrates' writings. The book was created by collecting the writings originating from the Kos medical school of Hippocrates and the Knidos medical school (competing with the Hippocrates school) many years after the death of Hippocrates by the scientists of the Great Library of Alexandria (Βιβλιοθήκη τῆς Ἀλεξάνδρειας, Bibliotheca Alexandrina). There is also no evidence that Hippocrates himself wrote anything, although some works from the aforementioned collection are believed to accurately reflect the teachings of the great physician [12–14].

The relic concept of ancient doctors, included also in the *Corpus Hippocraticum*, is a consideration of all disorders involving the joints as gout. This terminology persisted until the XVIII century, despite earlier observations pointing to “various clinical forms” of gout [3]. The XIX century was a period of

an intense and relatively accurate description of the symptomatology and course of many diseases. In the second half of this century, internal medicine emerged as an independent speciality. It resulted from the possibility of the indirect vital organs examination (percussion, auscultation) as well as the development of anatomical pathology. It facilitated attempts to correlate clinical data with *post-mortem* examination [15–19]. Dermatology (“external medicine”) and paediatrics were also separated, and earlier surgery had been considered a distinct speciality which after the guild period, returned to university medicine. From internal medicine, at different times in various countries, neurology and medicine of infectious diseases have been separated. Another element in the process of developing of internal medicine as a new speciality was the progress in clinical chemistry being the basis of the emergence of laboratory diagnostics. Shortly after, the era of bacteriology and immunology began. The discovery of X-rays has greatly expanded the possibilities of examining internal organs. Similarly, advances in functional testing enriched the diagnostic tools of internal medicine. All this made internal medicine not only a new speciality, but also distinguished it from traditional medicine by the pathophysiological approach to the interpretation of indirect examination of internal organs [15–19]. A more definitive distinction of a variety of rheumatic diseases began also in the XIX century. This phenomenon continued in the following years [20–23].

Interest in diseases of the musculoskeletal system was common for internists, balneologists, and physicians dealing with physical therapy and rehabilitation. The idea of establishing

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an international organization of rheumatologists was first presented in March 1913 by the Dutch physician Jan van Breemen (1875–1961) during the 4<sup>th</sup> International Congress for Physiotherapie (*Internationalen Kongress für Physiotherapie*) in Berlin. Efforts to establish the organization were interrupted by the outbreak of World War I. It was not until 1919 that the International Organization for the Investigation of Rheumatism (*Comité International pour le Rhumatisme*) was established. The initiator of the foundation, Jan van Breemen became the secretary general, and R. Fortescue Fox (1858–1940) from England was elected to the post of the first president of the new organization. The name and structure of the organization were changed during the Congress of the International Society of Medical Hydrology (*La Société Internationale d'Hydrologie Médicale*) in Paris in 1925, also at the request of Jan van Breemen. This is how *La Ligue Internationale Contre le Rhumatisme* (International League Against Rheumatism) was created. Currently, the organization operates under the name of the International League of Associations for Rheumatology (ILAR). The first international rheumatology congresses were held in 1928 (Bath, UK), 1930 (Liège, Belgium), 1932 (Paris, France), 1934 (Moscow, Soviet Union) and 1936 (Lund, Sweden) [24].

In response to the creation of the international association, national groups representing physicians interested in rheumatology were founded. They were representations of individual countries in *La Ligue Internationale Contre le Rhumatisme*. In Poland, in December 1928, on the initiative of Witold Chodźko (1875–1954), the minister of public health and social welfare during the first years after independence, the **Polish Committee Against Rheumatism** (*Polski Komitet do Walki z Reumatyzmem*) was established. It can be considered the first Polish rheumatological society. Its aim was not only to represent the country in *La Ligue Internationale Contre le Rhumatisme*, but also to promote scientific research and development of rheumatological treatment as well as education of doctors. The chairman of the Committee was Witold Chodźko and the secretary, Henryk Kłuszyński (1870–1933). Members of the Committee are not exactly known. It seems that the members of the Committee were Franciszek Raszeja (1896–1942) and Antoni Jan Sabatowski (1880–1967) [24]. Unfortunately, the printed materials of the

first international rheumatological congresses are not available in Polish libraries, and it is difficult to identify Polish participants in these meetings. It was reported that Eleonora Reicher (1884–1973) [25–28] participated in the congresses in Paris and Moscow. The Polish Committee Against Rheumatism had many features of a scientific society but was most likely based on individuals appointed to the Committee by the minister of public health, and this distinguishes the Committee from a typical scientific society. During the organization the First Polish Congress on Investigation and Management of Rheumatism (*Pierwszy Polski Zjazd w Sprawie Badania i Zwalczania Reumatyzmu*), the Committee was transformed into the **Polish Society Against Rheumatism** (*Polskie Towarzystwo Zwalczania Gośćca, Polskie Towarzystwo do Walki z Gośćcem*). It took place on February 15, 1930, in Warsaw [29, 30]. In this way, a new medical scientific society was established. The first Board of the Polish Society Against Rheumatism included: Witold Eugeniusz Orłowski (1874–1966) [31–33], the president, Henryk Kłuszyński (1870–1933), the vice-president, Brunon Antoni Nowakowski (1890–1966), secretary general, Jan Babecki, treasurer and members: Stanisław Januszkiewicz (1903–1979), Franciszek Raszeja and Antoni Sabatowski.

The Society participated in the establishment of the first rheumatic clinics (in Cracow, Poznan and Warsaw) and the rheumatology hospital ward in Iwonicz. Unfortunately, I have not found any more detailed data about this ward. It is interesting because the first rheumatology hospital ward in Europe, or perhaps in the world, is considered to be the ward established in Trenčianske Teplice (Trentschin-teplitz) in Slovakia in 1942 [34]. The Society led to the development of the Polish classification and terminology of rheumatic diseases as well as a questionnaire for collecting patient interviews. Education was performed and lectures on rheumatology were delivered at the training courses for doctors. Delegates of the Polish Society Against Rheumatism since 1930 officially participated in the works of *La Ligue Internationale Contre le Rhumatisme*, and in 1932 Poland became a member of this international organization.

The individuals of the Executive Board and the number of society members in the first years of its activity are unknown. Until 1939, the president was Witold Eugeniusz Orłowski.

Eleonora Reicher was the secretary general in the years 1932–1939.

The First Polish Congress on Investigation and Management of Rheumatism was held on September 6–7, 1930 in Inowrocław, and a very successful event. The proceedings of the congress were published and reprinted in a modern edition with commentary by the Polish Society of Rheumatology [35].

The outbreak of World War II interrupted society's activities. Most of society's documents were also lost. After the war, society resumed its activity. In the years 1945–1953 the president was Mieczysław Michałowicz (1876–1965) and the secretary general was Jadwiga Wawrzyńska-Pągowska (1907–1999) [36, 37]. In Copenhagen, on September 4, 1947, during the First European Congress of Rheumatology, the European League Against Rheumatism, commonly known under the acronym EULAR [38], was established. The Polish Society Against Rheumatism was one of the founding societies of EULAR. In 1952, the name of the society was changed, replacing the name of the Polish Society Against Rheumatism with the name of the **Polish Society for Rheumatology** (*Polskie Towarzystwo Reumatologiczne*).

Comparing the history of the founding of the Polish Society for Rheumatology, it is possible to show the coincidence of dates with the establishment of rheumatological societies in other countries. In the United States, in Philadelphia, the American Committee for the Control of Rheumatism was established in 1928, renamed the American Association for the Study and Control of Rheumatism in 1934, and three years later renamed the American Rheumatism Association. In 1965, after some organizational changes, the American College of Rheumatology was founded. In Great Britain, in 1936, the Heberden Society was established, honouring William Heberden senior (1710–1801), the “father of British rheumatology”, whom we associate with hand nodules present in patients with osteoarthritis. The British Association for Rheumatology and Rehabilitation was established in 1942 (initially as: the British Association of Physical Medicine). In 1984, both societies merged to form the British Society for Rheumatology. As a curiosity, I would like to add that the Polish association of rheumatologists uses the British English name “Polish Society for Rheumatology” different from the name in American English, i.e. “Polish Society of Rheumatolo-

gy”. The *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Rheumatologie*, was established on January 28, 1927, and it is a year older than the Polish association. It was established as a representation of German doctors for the *La Ligue Internationale Contre le Rhumatisme*. It should be added that in the German Democratic Republic, the “Working Group for Rheumatology” (*Arbeitskreis Rheumatologie*) was initially founded, and later in 1967 the German Society of Rheumatology (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Rheumatologie*) was established as part of the Society for Clinical Medicine of the GDR (*Gesellschaft für klinische Medizin der DDR*). It was not recognized by all international organizations, but it is necessary to recall the cooperation of this society with Polish rheumatologists. During the Congress of the German Society of Rheumatology in Hanover (September 26, 2000), the organizations of both former German states were merged. In the same year as the German society, the French Society of Rheumatology (*Société Française de Rhumatologie*) was founded on March 26, 1927. In 1928, the Committee for the Study and Combating Rheumatism (*Комитет по изучению ревматизма и борьбе с ним*) was established in the Soviet Union. It was transformed initially into the All-Union Scientific Society of Rheumatologists (in 1964 *Всесоюзное научное общество ревматологов*), and in 1987 into the All-Russian Scientific Society of Rheumatologists (*Всероссийское научное общество ревматологов*). Since 1991, the society has the name, Association of Rheumatologists of Russia (*Ассоциация ревматологов России*).

The presented historical sketch is based on the materials that I was able to collect from various sources. Unfortunately, both the pre-war archives and the materials from the first half-century of the post-war activity of the Polish Society for Rheumatology are not available. There is still hope to find at least some of them. For now, the search for reports, notes and information contained in medical journals or conference materials remains for historians of medicine. We are slowly approaching the centenary of our society. On behalf of the Historical Section of the Polish Society for Rheumatology, due to the lack of historical sources, I should greatly appreciate all support in collecting such materials (including photographs), both referring to a distant history, and events from the last several or more years ago.

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