



**Professor Witold Niepołomski  
(20.05.1916-18.08.2006)**

Professor Witold Niepołomski was born on 20<sup>th</sup> May, 1916 in Cracow. In 1920, the family, due to official transfer of the father, colonel Ignacy Niepołomski, moved to Warsaw. He attended (1925-1934) the Mikołaj Rej Humanistic Secondary School in Warsaw, and after graduation begun to study at the Medical Faculty of Józef Piłsudski University in 1934. He also attended the violin classes at the Warsaw Conservatory. Since 1936 he worked as a volunteer at the University Department of Pathological Anatomy under professor Ludwik Paszkiewicz. He was bound to pathological anatomy for 70 years. His first paper on "Benign tumours of the gallbladder" was published still during his study, in 1938. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of September, 1939, on the day of the outbreak of the World War II, he passed the diploma examination in pathological anatomy under professor Ludwik Paszkiewicz. He was granted his medical diploma on 19<sup>th</sup> April, 1940.

During the occupation he worked as a doctor in Warsaw, first, in Wolski Hospital, Radium Institute. Then, from 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1942 to 31<sup>st</sup> July, 1944, again with

professor Ludwik Paszkiewicz, as a senior assistant in the Pathological Anatomy Department of the Infant Jesus Hospital. There, he participated actively in secret medicine teaching until the Warsaw Uprising. During the Uprising he worked in a little hospital in Mokotowska Street. After the fall of the Uprising, together with his wife Wanda, they went to Milanówek, and later till February 1945, he worked as a doctor in the village Strugienice near Łowicz.

However, at the beginning of February 1945, he returned to Warsaw and till October, 1946, he was, with professor Paszkiewicz, reconstructing the Pathological Anatomy Department after the destruction caused by the war. He also took up teaching students. In autumn 1946, he moved to Łódź, where together with professor Aleksander Pruszczyński, from 1<sup>st</sup> November, he was creating the first Department of Pathological Anatomy of Medical Faculty at the local university. In 1948, on the basis of his dissertation: "Zmiany w narządach wydzielania wewnętrznego, zwłaszcza w tarczycy i nadnerczach w przypadkach "przerostu" stercza

i mięśniaków macicy” (“Changes in the organs of inner secretion, mainly thyroid and adrenal glands in cases of “overgrowth” of prostate and uterine myomas”) he was granted the title of the Doctor of Medicine. In 1949, he made a program for teaching pathology in the schools for nurses. In November of this year, he became the Head of the City Pathological Institute in Łódź. Additionally, in 1949, he published in “Tygodnik Lekarski” (“Medical Weekly”) the famous paper: “Rozważania teoretyczne na temat etiologii i patogenezy nowotworów. Rola czynnika HR” (“Theoretical considerations on etiology and pathogenesis of neoplasms. The role of HR factor”). Referring to this study, professor Rudolf Klimek in a letter of 4<sup>th</sup> April, 1981 to professor Witold Niepołomski wrote: “... Czynniki HR dzisiaj ma swoją doskonałą dokumentację dzięki rozwojowi biochemii molekularnej. Podziwiam Pańską intuicję naukową w czasach, gdy nikomu nie śniło się o DNA i innych nukleotydach” (“HR factor has a fantastic documentation nowadays due to development of molecular biochemistry. I admire your scientific intuition in the times when nobody even dreamt of DNA and other nucleotides”).

The degree of a habilitated doctor in medical sciences, Witold Niepołomski received in 1952 at the Medical Faculty of Medical Academy in Łódź on the basis of research and didactic evaluation and his habilitation study: “Doświadczalne badania porównawcze nad szybkością opadania krwinek w osoczu heparynowanym i w osoczu z dodatkiem cytrynianu sodu u królików zdrowych oraz u zakażonych paciorkowcami, gronkowcami i prątkami gruźlicy” (“Experimental comparative studies on the velocity of erythrocytes sedimentation in heparin plasma and in plasma with addition of sodium citrate in healthy rabbits and in rabbits infected with streptococci, staphylococci and mycobacterium tuberculosis”). The subject of his habilitation lecture was silicosis. Two years later he was granted the title of an assistant professor, in 1954, the title of an associate professor in 1958, and the title of a professor in 1966.

He arrived to Zabrze in summer in 1950, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September he became the v-ce professor and the head of the Chair and Department of Pathological Anatomy, of which he was the head, with a short break, for almost 36 years! Just before he left Łódź, he made an unusual autopsy, recorded in the history of Łódź ...veterinary. Yes, it was an autopsy of the

2.5 ton hippopotamus *Lusia*. From today’s perspective, this huge animal examined by the young doctor symbolizes the challenges that he undertook in Warsaw and Łódź and even bigger challenges that were waiting for him in Silesia.

Living in Silesia and being the Head of the newly created Chair and Department of Pathological Anatomy, despite his young age, 34 years old then, he was an experienced doctor, academic tutor and scientist. Another, the third one after Warsaw and Łódź, and the biggest adventure of professor Witold Niepołomski with pathological anatomy, research and academic teaching begun.

Its first stage was building from the very beginning the first in Silesia Chair and Department of Pathological Anatomy (Pathomorphology) in Zabrze. After many years, the fourth department in professor’s life will be created, the one at the Medical Faculty in Katowice. It was a result of the passion of the academic lecturer and tutor teaching pathological anatomy to the generations of students for almost half a century (since Warsaw times to 1986). I remember very clearly a lecture hall very tightly filled with students in the University Hospital No 1 in Zabrze during professor’s lectures on tumours.

In the first years of the Chair activities, Professor created a resilient research and didactic team from the young researchers and tutors, students and physicians. He had to overcome numerous obstacles at that time. The one worth mentioning here was the situation in the early 50s when almost all young doctors employed in the Department were conscripted to the army for many years. At one point, there were only the Professor, 2 assistants and a few students left to teach several hundreds students of medicine and dentistry, which was not the only task of the Department, they also made dozens autopsies and hundreds, and soon thousands histopathologies.

Together with his young stuff, Professor developed a new, very important for Silesia, branch of medical knowledge, namely, pathology of occupational diseases, especially pathomorphology of pneumoconiosis and studies on the influence of physical factors on the body. The 60s and early 70s brought the innovative studies on introduction of electronic calculating methods into research studies and diagnosing. The 5<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Polish Society of Anatomopathologists organized in Katowice in 1970 whose main subject was patholo-

gy of occupational diseases and drug-induced changes can be considered to be the resume of that period.

At last, the fact of founding Silesian pathomorphology was the most important for the needs of a huge agglomeration and medical service in the province of Katowice, Opole and neighboring areas. Rarely can someone be called the originator of some discipline, specialization from the very grounds; even more rarely the instigator of the whole net of medical units fulfilling the diagnostic needs of multimillion population. Professor Witold Niepołomski was a person like that, the first regional specialist of pathological anatomy in Katowice province (1954-1980) and in Opole province (1954-1962). With an outstanding passion of academic tutor and diagnosing doctor, Professor passed his knowledge and experience on many generations of doctors, and even dozen years after his retirement until the beginning of this century.

A few dozens years of his work and experience have created a great piece of work of the Teacher and his disciples: Silesian School of Pathomorphology of Professor Witold Niepołomski. Let only professors of Silesian Academy of Medicine be mentioned among his disciples: Marian Sońnierz, Mieczysław Luciak, Zbigniew Szczurek, Mirosław Wieczorek, Bogdan Białas and oncologists from the Institute of Oncology in Gliwice and Warsaw: Irena and Andrzej Hliniak.

Silesian School of Pathomorphology includes already 3 generations of pathomorphologists. Till the year 1986, when Professor Niepołomski retired, 78 specialists of the first degree and 40 specialists of the second degree in pathomorphology were trained. Professor himself was the supervisor of 6 habilitation dissertations written by pathomorphologists and oncologists and of 21 doctorate theses.

Professor Niepołomski held also responsible positions within the Medical University of Silesia (SUM) authorities: twice as a Dean of Medical Faculty (1953-1954 and 1960-1962), for three tenures as University Rector (1962-1971). The years of holding the office of Rector included the extremely important period in the development of Medical University. At that time, the main offices of SUM were moved to Katowice (1964), the extension works were started, i.e. the building of the new Academic Centre in Katowice-Ligota begun in 1966. The crowning achievement of Professor Niepołomski as Rector was, in 1971, the foundation of Pharmaceutical Faculty. After his resignation from the

Rector's position and the change of SUM structure into institute structure, he was the Director of Pathology Institute in the years 1972-1976, and Cytodiagnostic Department in Katowice (1972-1975). From 1975 to his retirement (1986) he was the Head of the mother Pathomorphology Department (from 1981 – 1st Chair and Department of Pathomorphology) in Zabrze. In January 1990, the Academy honoured professor Witold Niepołomski with the title of doctor honoris causa.

Professor Witold Niepołomski was in the years 1956-1958 the Chairman of the Zabrze circle of Polish Medical Society, in 1958, he participated in founding the Silesian branches of the Polish Oncological Society and Polish Society of Anatomopathologists (now, Polish Society of Pathologists), he was also the chairman of those societies for many years (Branch of Silesian Oncological Society in 1959-1975; Branch of Silesian Society of Anatomopathologists in 1958-1961 and 1973-1976). Both societies honoured the contribution of Professor into the development of Polish pathomorphology and oncology by conferring a title of the honourable member of Polish Society of Pathologists in 1976 (presented in 1978) and Polish Oncological Society in 1986. Moreover, he was the Chairman of the Scientific Board of Oncology Institute in Warsaw (1968-1974) and the High Commission of Discipline for the workers of scientific institutes of the health and social care department at the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (1972-1975).

One cannot forget about another nature of Professor Witold Niepołomski, doctor – musician, outstanding violinist, graduate of Warsaw Conservatory of 1947. His first public concert took place on 7<sup>th</sup> April, 1946 in Warsaw. The last one, over a half century later, on 19<sup>th</sup> December, 1997 during the traditional Christmas Eve Supper of Pathologists in the Pathomorphology Department in Zabrze. Yet, there was also a wonderful concert on 30 June, 1989 with the State Symphonic Orchestra in Zabrze, where he, together with dr Antoni Bober, performed D-mol concert for two violins of Johann Sebastian Bach.

In closing, one more passion should be mentioned, otherwise the picture of Professor would not be complete. This passion was love for motor vehicles, precise mechanisms, his knowledge and skills. When young, he belonged to eager enthusiasts of motorcycles, which even saved his life during the occupation. In the 50s, he was the owner of the most famous in the Academy

then, the car “DKW” which he repaired himself. He was even able to restore it to life after it had been damaged by a military truck near Tarnowskie Góry (30<sup>th</sup> Dec, 1954) and prolong its life for a few years more. Even when he was over 80 years old, he arrived by his last car, Polonez, every Wednesday, for weekly his-topathological consultations in Zabrze.

He died on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August, 2006 and was buried on the 26<sup>th</sup> of August at the cemetery in Francuska Street in Katowice.

***Farewell Dear Professor!***  
***The memory of you will always stay with us!***

Daniel Sabat, M.D. on behalf of  
disciples and colleagues from the Chair and Department of Pathomorphology in Zabrze and members of the Silesian Branch of Polish Society of Pathologists

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