

Kazimierz Pelczar (1894–1943), the prominent professor of Vilnius Stefan Batory University (to the 110th anniversary of his birth)

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Professor K. Pelczar, Head of Department of General and Experimental Pathology of Medical Faculty at Stefan Batory University, the prominent oncologist, was born 2 August 1894 in Truskawiec. His father Z. Pelczar (1866–1934) was a physician balneologist, the owner of a sanatorium in Truskawiec, author of about 20 articles, among them “The Truskawiec health resort” and “A Centenary of Truskawiec, 1827–1927”. He inspired in his son love for medicine. K. Pelczar graduated from school in Drohobycz. In 1912–1914 he studied medicine at Cra-

cow Jagiellonian University. During World War I, in 1914–1915 he was in the Austrian army. He was taken prisoner by the Russian army and in 1915–1918 worked in the Red Cross sanitary service in Kiev and Moscow and in 1918–1920 in the sanitary service of Siberian Division. After its evacuation, through China and Japan, he got to Polish Army. In 1920–1923 K. Pelczar continued studies of medicine at Collegium Medicum of Cracow Jagiellonian University and in 1925 got the doctor’s degree. During studies he specialized in general and experimental pathology with Prof. K. Klecky and in investigations of pathology of metabolism with Prof. L. Marchlewski. In 1920–1930 he worked as assistant at the Department of General Pathology of Collegium Medicum of Cracow University. In 1927 K. Pelczar specialized in hematology and in experimental transplantation of tumours with Prof. H. Auer in Berlin. In 1928 he worked on probation at Pasteur Institute in Paris on biological research of malignant tumours and at Institute of Radium on research of antitumoural immunity. In 1929 at the Cracow Jagiellonian University he defended his habilitation work “Serological investigations of malignant tumour immunity” (1). In 1930 K. Pelczar was invited to Vilnius Stefan Batory University to head the Department of General and Experimental Pathology of Faculty of Medicine, which he headed until the end of 1939. In the 1937/1938 school year

K. Pelczar was the Dean and in the 1938/1939 school year Vice-dean of Faculty of Medicine. Also, in 1935–1937 he headed the Department of Bacteriology.

At Faculty of Medicine Prof. K. Pelczar gave the course of general pathology for third-year students in the 7th and 8th trimesters 5 hours a week and in the 9th trimester 3 hours a week intended for practical works in general pathology (2). His lectures were of a very high level corresponding to the achievements of world-wide medicine. Prof. K. Pelczar paid much attention to the teaching of general pathology and writing of manuals. The most important of them are “General Pathology” (Vilnius, 1938), “Pathology of Respiratory System and Blood” (Vilnius, 1936) and the articles “Pathology of pancreas” (1937), “Importance of inheritance in human pathology” (1932). Besides general pathology, for the fourth year students in the 10th trimester he gave a 24-hour cycle of lectures “Malignant tumours” and the cycle of lectures “Allergical diseases”, as well as elective courses on pathology of metabolism and blood (2).

Under the guidance of Prof. K. Pelczar scientific work at the department became more active, the number of scientific workers and post-graduate students increased. The scientific interests of researchers of the department under the guidance of Prof. K. Pelczar were very broad, including problems of oncological pathology, experimental endocrinology, immunology, rheumatology and health-resort. (3).

The erudition of Prof. K. Pelczar, his organizing abilities and international spirit helped to create a strong school of pathology, which embraced gifted physicians and scientists of different nations – Poles, Lithuanians, Russians, Jews, Byelorussians, Tatars. Many of his students later became prominent scientists, heads of departments of Faculties of Medicine in many countries and organizers of health service, among them J. Olszewski, Professor of Toronto University, M. Beklemishev, member of the Moscow Academy of Sciences, J. Stachelski, the many-year standing Minister of Health Service of Poland (4).

Prof. K. Pelczar was a scientist of very wide interests: the main fields of medicine in which he worked and published many publications were oncology, arthrology, cardiology, hematology and health-resort science. In total, he published about 85 large scientific works in Polish, French and German and many popular articles in everyday press. His main scientific works were in oncology: “Transplantation of malignant tumours” (Paris, 1928), “Aleksin and cancer” (Paris, 1931), “Significance of cold agglutination reaction for serodiagnostics of cancer”, “Investigations of antitumoural immunity”, “Detection of phosphatases in the blood of cancer pa-

tients”. Under the guidance of Prof. K. Pelczar in the laboratory was investigated the effect of birch fungus on the treatment of gastrointestinal and skin tumours; this fungus was used in popular medicine of Vilnius region.

Besides the oncological problems, for many years K. Pelczar investigated also the pathology of articulations. After many experiments he began to use injections of kefalín in the treatment of patients with nonspecific arthritis. This drug was used also in the treatment of tuberculosis with good results. When the Polish firms refused to produce this drug, K. Pelczar made an agreement with one German firm on its production. The results of the investigations of this drug were published in the articles “The influence of kefalín on the course of chronic arthritis” (1936), “The influence of kefalín and heparin on the synthesis of antibodies” (1933) (1).

In cardiology, K. Pelczar was interested in the problem of angina pectoris. In 1932 he published the article “Angina pectoris in the light of investigations of metabolism”. He published a number of scientific works in the field of hematology; the most important are “Platelets and anaphylactic shock” (1926), “Physiological investigations of blood platelets” (1926). Prof. K. Pelczar had good knowledge of foreign languages, he fluently used French, German, English, Russian, and this allowed him to participate in international congresses on pathology and oncology and make reports there (Paris, 1931, Madrid 1934, Brussels, 1936, London, 1937, 1938, Moscow, 1940).

Prof. K. Pelczar’s merits to Lithuanian oncology are great. Having noticed the lack of organized oncological service in Vilnius, in May 1931 he with Prof. K. Michejda and others renovated the Vilnius Committee Against Cancer (6). As in Vilnius there was no institution for investigation and treatment of cancer patients, Prof. K. Pelczar on 1 December 1931 established Institute of Oncology and Clinic in Vilnius at Polocko Street 6, where first he got some rooms in an old people’s home (4). In 1931 there was a hospital with 12 beds; in 1933 Department of Rentgenology, Histopathological Laboratory was opened, in 1935 radium was bought. Little by little increased the space of the Institute and augmented the number of the personnel.

In 1936 Prof. K. Pelczar in Vilnius organized the 4th Congress Against Cancer, in which many scientists from Germany, Poland, Latvia and Lithuania took part (5).

Except his direct posts (Head of Department of General and Experimental Pathology of Faculty of Medicine, Vilnius Stefan Batory University and Director of Institute of Oncology), he had many public duties: 1. Chairman of Vilnius and Naugardukas

Union of Physicians; 2. Chairman of Vilnius Section of the Kopernik Association; 3. Vice-president of the union for fight with cancer of Poland; 4. Member of International Council of London for fight with cancer; 5. Member of the international Union of Paris for fight with cancer; 6. Member of Vilnius Committee for fight with cancer; 7. Member of the scientific council of Warsaw Radium Institute; 8. Member of the editorial council of the journal "Acta Cancerologica" in Budapest; 9. Member of the editorial council of the journal "Zeitschrift für Krebsforschung" in Berlin; 10. Member of the board of Vilnius Charity Society (1).

Prof. K. Pelczar was very popular in Vilnius because of his sociable character, culture, width of interests and knowledge, sympathy with people, disinterested medical practice. Professor was a great amateur of art, collected paintings, had a talent for art himself.

Prof. K. Pelczar was a very social man. In 1939–1940 he guided the Polish section of International Red Cross and Polish Committee in Vilnius, which organized the saving of thousands of Polish refugees from hunger and poverty. In 1941–1943, in the hospital at Polocko Street, he hid many students of Jewish and other nationalities from nazis. As he was threatened by danger from nazis, the universities of Rome, London, Warsaw, New York offered him professorship, but he refused. In 1943 he agreed to occupy the post of Director of Warsaw Oncological Institute, but was arrested by nazis. It happened at night, from 16 to 17 September 1943, during a repression action carried out in response to the murder of the policeman M. Padaba who worked in Gestapo. From the 100 arrested, ten hostages, Prof. K. Pelczar among them, in the morning of 17 September 1943 were shot. After execution, from Berlin came the order to liberate Prof. K. Pelczar.

This was the tragic end of the life of K. Pelczar, the prominent Professor of Vilnius Stefan Batory University.

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KAZIMIERAS PELČARAS (1894–1943) – ŽYMUS STEPONO BATORO UNIVERSITETO PROFESORIUS (110-osioms gimimo metinėms)

S a n t r a u k a

K. Pelčaras, žymus Stepono Batoro universiteto profesorius bei Onkologijos instituto ir klinikos vadovas, gimė 1894 08 02 Traskavece, gydytojo balneologo šeimoje. 1923 metais jis baigė Krokuvos Jogailos universiteto Collegium Medicum. 1920–1930 m. buvo Krokuvos Jogailos universiteto Collegium Medicum Bendrosios patologijos katedros asistentas, 1925 m. jam suteiktas daktaro laipsnis. Dirbdamas Krokuvos Jogailos universitete, 1927 m. stažavosi Berlyne, hematologijos srityje, 1928 m. – Paryžiuje, Pastero ir Radžio institutuose, priešnavikinio imuniteto tyrimuose. 1929 m. Krokuvos Jogailos universitete apgynė habilitacinį darbą „Serologiniai piktybinių navikų imuniteto tyrimai“. 1930 m. K. Pelčaras buvo pakviestas į Vilniaus Stepono Batoro universiteto Medicinos fakultetą vadovauti Bendrosios ir eksperimentinės patologijos katedrai, kuriai vadovavo iki 1939 m. pabaigos. 1937–1938 m. K. Pelčaras buvo Medicinos fakulteto dekanas, 1938–1939 m. – prodekanas. Vadovaujant prof. K. Pelčarui Bendrosios ir eksperimentinės patologijos katedros veikla labai suaktyvėjo: išaugo mokslo darbuotojų ir disertantų skaičius, mokslinis katedros darbas apėmė onkologijos, eksperimentinės endokrinologijos, imunologijos, reumatologijos ir kurortologijos sritis.

1931 m. pradžioje prof. K. Pelčaras kartu su kitais profesoriais atnaujino Vilniaus komiteto kovai su vėžiu veiklą, o tą pačių metų gale įkūrė sergančiųjų vėžiu tyrimo ir gydymo įstaigą, kuri laikytina Onkologijos instituto pradžia. Šiai įstaigai prof. K. Pelčaras vadovavo iki pat savo tragiškos žūties.

1943 m. rugsėjo 17 d. naktį prof. K. Pelčaras buvo areštuotas gestapo represinės akcijos metu, kuri buvo atsakas į policininko, dirbusio gestape, nužudymą. Iš 100 areštuotų įkairių dešimt iš jų (tarp jų ir prof. K. Pelčaras) rugsėjo 17 d. rytą buvo sušaudyti Paneriuose. Ir tik po egzekucijos atėjo raštas dėl prof. K. Pelčaro išlaisvinimo.