

110th Anniversary of the Polish Society of Internal Medicine

Foundation of the Polish Society of Internal Medicine

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Internal medicine as an independent specialty emerged from medicine in the second half of the 19th century. Traces of diversity between medicine applying surgical and nonsurgical (conservative) methods can be found in antiquity.¹ For ages surgery was considered as a craft and was not included in academic instruction of medicine until the 17th and 18th centuries. The term “internal medicine” was used for the first time in the 16th century by Paracelsus (Phillippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim) but internal medicine as a clinical specialty and independent field of research was recognized in the 19th century.²

The process of emerging of internal medicine was more complex than simple identification of a new specialty. It resulted from the growing understanding of the role of examination of “non-visible” internal organs that had been forerun by the development of methods of their indirect evaluation (initially, percussion and auscultation). This was associated with a pathophysiological attitude of internists opposite to a descriptive view only of physicians of earlier generations. Additionally, internal medicine focused on holistic approach and observation of the patient.³

The term “internal medicine” was coined in Germany (*innere Medizin*) and was adopted in many European countries, including Poland, and the United States, while Great Britain and some other countries used the term “medicine” or “general medicine” instead.

Poland lost its independence in 1795 and was partitioned throughout the whole 19th century by Germany, Russia, and Austria. Despite difficulties and constraints imposed by the occupants, Polish physicians contributed to the development of medicine. The main scientific event of Polish physicians was the Congress of Polish Physicians and Naturalist (in Polish: Zjazd Lekarzy

i Przyrodników Polskich) organized since 1869. The meetings were organized with a great effort despite impediments from the occupant authorities.

The oldest known mention of the very concept of creating the association of Polish internists was the resolution of the 6th Congress of Polish Physicians and Naturalists adopted in Kraków on July 20, 1891, and submitted by the famous Polish internist Edward John Sas-Korczyński (1844–1905) (FIGURE 1).⁴ He was a professor of internal medicine at Jagiellonian University and for years served as head of the university hospital.^{5,6} A summary of the address of Edward J. Sas-Korczyński appeared in print in the *Proceedings of the Congress* (so called *Daily*). According to the *Proceedings*, he declared: “Medical sciences and especially internal medicine are advanced so quickly that a need to organize conferences devoted to this limited field only becomes higher and higher. Such conferences organized abroad are very popular. They contribute to development of research and discussions during the meetings and help to find the best directions for further investigations. Polish internal medicine has comparable level to medicine of other countries and needs more time (at conferences) to presents its results. It is evidenced by a number of papers on internal medicine delivered at this Congress (ie, the 6th Congress of Polish Physicians and Naturalists – translator’s note) but also by a number of papers which were rejected due to limited time of the sessions. Thus, I suggest organizing the annual conference of internal medicine which will be held in Kraków”.⁷ This resolution was adopted and the Standing Committee chaired by Edward J. Sas-Korczyński was convened. The following internists became members of the Committee: Ladislaus Anthony Gluziński (1856–1935), Oskar Widmann (1839–1900), Francis Chłapowski

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FIGURE 1 Edward J. Sas-Korczyński. Source: Wikipedia, public domain



(1846–1923), Theodore Dunin (1854–1909), Alfred Sokołowski (1849–1924), and Thaddaeus Bętkowski (dates unknown).^{8–10}

Professor Korczyński had been in touch with foreign medical centers, especially Austrian and German. In both countries, internal medicine was emerging as an independent specialty and new associations of internists were founded.

The Section of Internal Medicine was organized for the first time within the 10th International Congress of Medicine (Berlin 1890). In 1882, the German Society of Internal Medicine had its first congress organized in Wiesbaden (April 20, 1882). A few years later, Austrian and Italian internists founded their associations. Polish physicians were active participants of many of these events. Ladislaus Anthony Gluziński presented a lecture of the 10th Internal Congress of Medicine in Berlin.^{11,12}

The fate of the Committee founded in Kraków in 1891 remains unknown. The next Congresses

of Polish Physicians and Naturalists had Sessions of Internal Medicine (in 1894 in Lviv). The Congress of 1898 (Poznań) was cancelled by German authorities. The idea of organizing independent conferences on internal medicine appeared once again during the Congress in Kraków (July 21–24, 1900) and was implemented during the preparation of the next congress. In 1906, the Standing Committee was founded by Ladislaus Anthony Gluziński. He was one of the best known Polish physicians in the world and for years was devoted to the development of internal medicine.^{13,14}

The foundation of the Committee marked the beginning of the Society, and the Section of Internal Medicine at the 10th Congress of Polish Physicians and Naturalist (Lviv, July 22–25, 1907) was considered as the first Congress of the Society. Unfortunately, the occupant authorities did not agree to the name of the Society, and it was registered as “The Society of Internists of Polish Lands” (in Polish, Towarzystwo Internistów Ziemi

FIGURE 2 Ladislaus Anthony Gluziński (photo made in about 1930) (author's collection)



Polskich). Before the outbreak of World War I, 4 congresses of the Society were held. The first congress in independent Poland was organized in Vilnius on July 8–11, 1923. The name of the Society was changed to the current one: Polish Society of Internal Medicine (in Polish, Towarzystwo Internistów Polskich).

Ladislaus Anthony Gluziński was the president of the Society since its foundation.¹⁵ The 5th Congress of the Polish Society of Internal Medicine in Vilnius was also associated with the foundation of the Society's journal: *Polish Archives of Internal Medicine* (*Polskie Archiwum Medycyny Wewnętrznej* [*Pol Arch Med Wewn*]). The launch of the journal succeeded thanks to efforts of Gluziński,

and he also served as the first editor-in-chief of the journal.^{16,17}

The archives of the Society were burnt during the Warsaw Uprising (1944). Thus, the early history of the Society's foundation can be described only on the basis of indirect sources, mostly reports published in medical journals and those included in the proceedings of various conferences. Many details remain unknown but it is clear that Ladislaus Anthony Gluziński was the leading individual in the long-lasting efforts to found the Society (FIGURE 2). He was a disciple of Edward Sas-Korczyński, he participated in several international conferences on internal medicine, and he was active in the formation of internist

movement since the very beginning, the committee proposed by Korczyński in 1891. The Polish Society of Internal Medicine owes a lot to its founder, and on the 110th anniversary of the Society's foundation once again we pay tribute to Ladislaus Anthony Gluziński, the great man, outstanding physician, and important personality in the world of internal medicine.

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