

# Professor Tadeusz Orłowski: in memory of an outstanding doctor and a leading personality in the scientific life

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Professor Tadeusz Orłowski passed away on July 30, 2008. He was an outstanding physician and the teacher of many generations of doctors, a distinguished and committed scientist, an author of about 400 scientific publications, the supervisor of a few dozen doctoral theses in medical sciences and also a former soldier of the Home Army (Armia Krajowa, Polish resistance organization during World War II), an excellent mountaineer and, more importantly, a man full of kindness helping many of his friends and an authority on scientific and medical issues. The notice of his death filled us with deep grief.

I have the honor of presenting a few reflections on the work of Professor Tadeusz Orłowski on behalf of the medical circles cooperating with the Polish Academy of Sciences (Polska Akademia Nauk – PAN). I knew Professor Orłowski for many years, he showed his kindness and offered his help during the time that I have spent at the Medical Academy of Warsaw and the PAN. It is my wish to express my respect through this remembrance.

Professor Tadeusz Orłowski was born on September 13, 1917 in Kazań but he spent practically his whole life in Warsaw where he received general and medical education. In 1943, he completed medical studies at the underground University of Warsaw. In the years 1943–1948, he worked at the University of Warsaw being involved in research work and education, subsequently he worked at the Medical Academy (1948–1987). In the post-war period he also worked at the Scientific Institute of Physical Culture of Warsaw. In the years 1954–1955, he was in charge of the Polish Red Cross hospital in Hyn-Nam (Korea). He interned in departments in Lund (1958), St. Louis (1959–1960), London (1962) and Pisa (1962). He was the chairman

of the First Department of Internal Diseases at the Medical Academy of Warsaw (1963–1975), the director of the Transplantation Institute (1975–1987) and a professor in the Institute of Biocybernetics and Biomedical Engineering at the PAN (1990–2008).

For decades Professor Tadeusz Orłowski was an active member of the PAN; he was an associate secretary at the Department of Medical Sciences (1963–1968), subsequently a secretary at the Department (1969–1971), the first associate scientific secretary at the PAN (1979–1980) and a member of the PAN Board (1966–1980 and 1984–1989). While he was working at the Academy, he was the prime mover and organizer of the Transplantation Institute, which initially functioned as a joint unit of the PAN and the Medical Academy of Warsaw and was subsequently incorporated to the Academy. He was actively involved in establishing the Ludwik Hirszfeld Institute of Immunology and Experimental Therapy in Wrocław, the PAN Center for Experimental and Clinical Medicine in Warsaw, the PAN Institute of Human Genetics in Poznań and the Central Tissue Bank. When retired, he was still spending a lot of time in the Institute, supervised research and was always ready to hold consultations.

It has to be noted that he was involved in the first successful kidney transplant in Poland (1963), prepared and introduced immunotherapy for primary glomerulopathies into the clinical practice and modified the treatment of end-stage renal disease. He helped to design a coil and a parallel plate dialyzer used in the treatment of patients with renal failure; he also introduced rabbit anti-lymphocyte globulin for the treatment of kidney transplant rejection. He was the author of many textbooks. In the years 1963–1994, he served as editor-in-chief of the *Polish Archives of Internal Medicine*.

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Among Professor's other achievements, research on organ transplantation is of great importance. I would like to recall the Professor's words written at the time when transplantology was only beginning to develop, i.e. in the 1960s.

Professor Tadeusz Orłowski wrote: *We had to acquaint ourselves with the emerging transplant immunology, obtain information regarding the treatment of organ recipients, particularly the prevention of organ rejection. We could get proper information from foreign publications. However, it was difficult to read them in Poland and our immunologists refused to cooperate claiming that the pointlessness of organ transplantation had been SCIENTIFICALLY PROVEN.* Two conclusions can be drawn from the above-stated: the low quality of research in immunology and substantial research gap between the basic and practical medicine. I am happy to say that in the 1960s and 1970s there were considerable advances in the field of immunology; clinical transplantology developed considerably, and theoreticians understood that the activities aiming at establishing new diagnostic and treatment methods could be meaningful and that type of work was not necessarily easier than purely theoretical speculation. Until now both matters are dealt with by the Transplantation Institute in Warsaw, the Institute of Immunology and Experimental Therapy in Wrocław as well as many other institutes and departments. Thanks to those institutes and departments it was possible for doctors of different specialties to join their efforts, which resulted in establishing clinical transplantology in Poland. Professor Tadeusz Orłowski deserves credit for this.

The Professor's presence among us truly enriched our lives. Not only because his scientific achievements comprised so many significant constataions but also due to the fact that when it came to important matters he was always firm and principled, whether the matter concerned scientific research, the future of his colleagues or the intention of doing something on a large scale.

Not many Poles can be credited with such a significant contribution to medical progress. Now, when such a distinguished personality is gone, the medical circles would like to thank Professor Tadeusz Orłowski for his remarkable effort as well as commitment and promise to always remember his accomplishments.