

PRO MEMORIAM

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Children and youth in forensic-medical views of Edmund Chróścielewski¹ (1914–1998) Recollections on the centenary of his birthday

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What can link forensic medicine with pediatrics? Certainly sudden, unexpected death of a child and the indispensable post-mortem examination. Anything more than thanatology? Professor Edmund Chróścielewski (Figure 1), the multi-year head of the Chair and Department of Forensic Medicine, School of Medicine in Poznań (1952–1985), whose centenary of birthday elapses in 2014, provided an example that the broad problems of children and youth may be within the apparently distinct scope of interest manifested by a forensic medic.

This aspect of Professor's professional activity remains unknown to paediatrists, even within their Poznań community. The centenary of his birthday provides an excellent chance to recall this significant portion of Professor's studies and opinions. Also problems of Polish children and youth under occupation and war were always in his interests. As a prisoner of the concentration camp in Auschwitz and a participant in the active struggle with the occupant he carried his personal painful experiences.

As a specialist in forensic medicine and pathomorphology, in the early 1950th he devoted several of his investigations to problems of post-mortem examination of children with inborn developmental errors. They included diaphragmatic hernias, oesophageal

atresia, organic heart diseases. On the basis of pathomorphological patterns he was undertaking attempts of clarifying causes of death in newborns deceased in the course of erythroblastosis and kernicterus. He conducted also forensic evaluation of pulmonary atelectasis in newborns [1]. Problems of juvenile age toxicology [2] and forensic evaluation of foetuses were within his interests. An interesting casuistic publication, of which he was a co-author, involved analysis of group

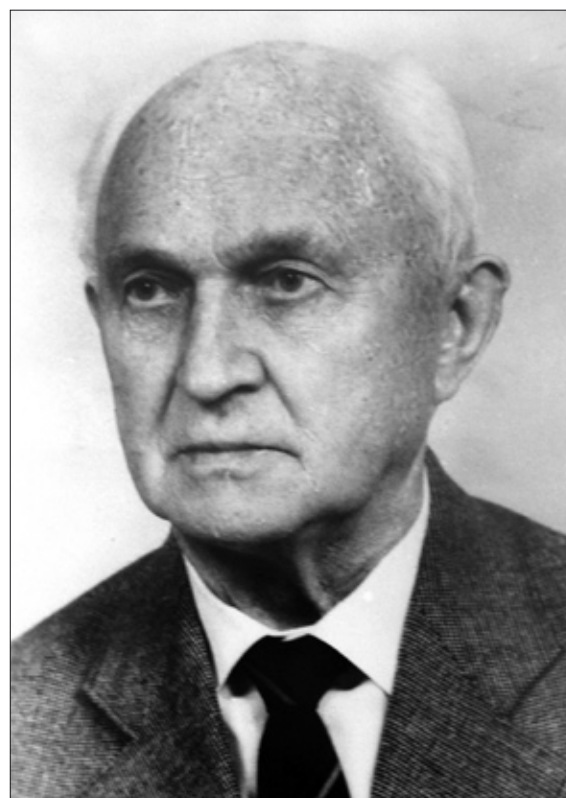


Figure 1. Professor Edmund Chróścielewski

¹ Edmund Chróścielewski (1914–1998), professor, head of the Chair and Department of Forensic Medicine, Medical School in Poznań (1952–1985), political prisoner in concentration camp of Auschwitz, a soldier of the Home Army, participant of Warsaw Uprising, author of approximately 200 publications, i.a. within scopes of forensic medicine, social problems, war and occupation, including martyrology of Polish children, participant in identification of bodies in Katyń graves, multi-year guardian of the University Sports Club (AZS).

intoxication with anilin, contained in an ink used for labelling clothes [3].

The undoubted exponent of his experience involved the first in Poland textbook on „Autopsy of foetal and newborns' bodies” [4], prepared in co-operation with Halina Szperl-Seyfriedowa, which was published also in Russian. In co-operation with pathomorphologists (J. Groniowski, M. Rożynek) he analysed causes of death in foetuses and newborns.

He documented and analysed causes of death in children following, e.g. treatment with oxytetracyclin [5] or following intramuscular administration of debecylin, streptomycin with novocain [6]. As indicated by the conducted analysis, the death developed due to anaphylactic shock, induced by administration of novocain. In co-operation with T. Marcinkowski he published a book on „Lethal complications following application of antibiotics” (1964). In co-operation with a lawyer and a psychiatrist he analysed the problem of infanticides [7]. He published also in German and French languages.

Professor Chróścielewski, perhaps as the first forensic medic, already in 1960s stressed the social role of forensic medicine [8]. In the forensic-medical aspect he evaluated problems of traffic safety and the problem of pharmacological doping in sport [9]. The problems were particularly familiar to him due to his direct contact with sport activity among the youth: for 20 years he fulfilled the role of guardian of the university's Academic Sports Association (AZS).

His own forensic experience in obstetrical problems (abortion, delivery and puerperium) and his interest in infanticide problems resulted in chapters devoted to such subjects in a textbook of forensic medicine [10].

Together with Kazimiera Brodzińska he drew readers' attention to difficulties in diagnosing death in cases of hypothermia [11], particularly in children. He concluded that in such cases criteria of conducted resuscitation and, in particular, qualification for taking organs for transplantation should be particularly demanding.

A separate problem, to which he devoted a lot of attention, involved „Children and youth in years of the Second World War” [12]. He analysed and presented the scope of martyrdom experienced by Polish children during Nazi occupation. In his works he demonstrated that biological extermination of Polish children and youth involved a programme prepared in the smallest details. The extermination was expressed in stripping Polish inhabitants, including children, of the elementary human rights. In the areas included to the Reich a list of first names was prepared, which can be given

to Polish newborns, Polish schools were closed, it was forbidden to attend theatres, museums and libraries, rigorous food rations were formulated. Children and youth of 14 to 21 years of age were transplanted to perform compulsory work in Germany or in the place of inhabitation (the so called Baudients), frequently for over 12 hours a day. Moreover, a systematic germanizing activity was conducted on Polish children. The discovered documents illustrate „robbery” of Polish children, particularly those evaluated as „racially valuable”. In line with Himmler's plan and that of the Office for Racial Policy, NSDAP all care and educational institutions were taken into supervision, forbidding use of Polish language. Children originating from mixed families, devoid of parents (arrested or deceased ones) or those under care of other family members were taken to German educational institutions (among other in Poznan, Puszczykowo and Kalisz) or to German substitute families. In order to obliterate traces of the felonious activity, date of birth, first and second names of the children were altered to German ones (the institution of „Lebensborn” E.V.). Chróścielewski [13] indicated that such individual actions were less known. On the other hand, everybody knew on the mass expatriation of Zamojszczyzna inhabitants in 1943, including around 30 thousand children, of whom 4450 following „racial” examination were sent to the Reich to become Germanized. Many children died in special camps with aggravated restrictions, i.a. in Łódź in which „Polen Jugendverwahrlager der Sicherheitspolizei in Litzmanstadt” was active. Beginning at the 8th year of age the children were obliged to work. Failure to execute obligations was punished by deprivation of food, arrest or flogging. Emaciating diseases which ended in death of children were widespread. Approximately 12 thousands children passed through the Litzmanstadt camp, during liberation 600 to 800 children were saved but a severely ill proportion of them died away. Children wards were functioning also in Majdanek and Auschwitz concentration camps [13]. Jewish children were subjected to full extermination. Today it is hard to believe that at a medical meeting of physicians (Matthias Mayer, Inowroclaw, 22nd July, 1944) the opinion was expressed that “Polish children should not be treated, their therapy is not necessary and not required by the national-socialistic policy of Germany” (after [12]). Professor Chróścielewski explicitly stressed that “crime on innocent children represents one of the darkest pages of the history of the Second World War. It represents a disgrace of 20th century [18]. His contemporary from the same university, the paediatrician

cian professor Olech Szczepski expressed the opinion that crimes of the years, performed in concentration camps of Auschwitz, Dachau and Buchenwald stripped physicians of their moral immunity" [19]. The relevant group of Chróścielewski's publications recalled the events painful but historically important for the Polish nation, particularly significant in view of the sporadically appearing pro-nazi slogans.

The vision of a social role manifested by forensic medicine led to a multidirectional development of the problems range by Chróścielewski, particularly as related to youth. He analysed relationships of youth drowning with alcohol consumption, increasingly severe problem of traumas [14] and of suicides among the youth [15]. In collaboration with paediatricians, i.a. at the cycle of conferences devoted to "Pubescence period" he discussed the effect of civilization on development of negative attitudes among the youth [16]. In his opinion the negative phenomena developing among the youngsters reflect inability of parents and caretakers to transmit the system of values and to demonstrate positive social sense of life. He presented his own view and interpretation of social conditioning behind the youngsters' movement of "hippies"² and "git-men"³ [17]. He indicated that deep social changes lead to "weakening of family bonds and reduction of family role in socialization of the new generation"... "the youth becomes an increasingly distinct sociological category with its own problems and own position in the social structure". Continued stating that "means of mass communication easier reach the youth than con-

tents transmitted by their direct educators...and they offer patterns and descriptions of violence, atrocities and degenerated sex." The tendency for shaping the independent youth world is promoted by advertising employing youth slang. "The fashion of "youth style" or "youth music" brings enormous income. Scepticism, egoism and consumer's approach to life, lack of ideals, indifference toward several problems basic to the society characterize youth of the sceptical generation". He continued to conclude that " a dramatic clash developed between the pattern of social reality and the system of noble principles and high ideas transmitted to the young individuals".

A phenomenon has also appeared of "rejecting any symbols which people used to value". Multiple behaviours of young people were calculated just to shock the surroundings. " The rules of crowd psychology changed street manifestations into street rows. Stones, bottles, pavement blocks became the weapons commonly used by the rebellious in their fights with the police". ..."in highly developed industrial civilizations positive phenomena are manifested in parallel with negative problems, reaching the range of social pathology, social maladjustment involving behaviour inconsistent with moral norms: alcoholism, prostitution, vagrancy, drug abuse down to criminal activities: downright robbery, hooliganism, sexual offences, etc". This text originated from 40 years ago. The problems of contemporary young people perhaps are not foreign nowadays, they just function under another heading. Despite the elapsing multiple years his appeal that "sexual education should precede street education" [8] continues to be up-to-date.

The problems dealt with by E. Chróścielewski expressed his particular care for the life path selection by the Polish youth. It should not be forgotten that his "passion involved the youth" [18]. He represented a commonly valued educator and friend. In 1958–1964 he organized and directed social-educational-recreation camps for students of medicine of his university. Not a single sport event at the university elapsed without his participation [20]. His war experiences (arrest by Gestapo and stay in concentration camp) left an indelible trace in his psyche and directed his interest of a forensic medic [21]. At his initiative in 1968 University Council of the Polish Students' Association in Poznan convened a national symposium devoted to martyrdom of children at the area of previous Warthegau (the region of Warta river), during which he presented an appropriate lecture. He enjoyed having many talents: he wrote poems, made drawings. Few of his drawings

² "Hippies" or "flower-children": youth of a narrow social margin, shocking their environment by their behaviour and the passed to pathological limits disregard to the commonly established norms of social life. In their refuge from society, the group attempts to help themselves using drugs, in their attempts of rationalizing their behaviour they reach to philosophy of buddhism and ceremonies of oriental cultures. In the programme of Polish hippies one can cote elements of ideological and political diversion and, occasionally, inspiration for undertaking anti-state activity and for breaking rules of law. The movement of hippies not only remains dangerous for mental and physical health of youth but it also breaks its ethical and social values (Chróścielewski 1973).

³ The phenomenon of "git-men" is related to social, behavioural maladjustment of a clearly criminogenic character. The "gits" included mostly boys lacking the appropriately shaped sphere of higher emotions, with emotional deficiency. They are powerful only when they are in a group. Their thesis of the so called "another life", expressing dysfunctional character of educational forms in re-socialization institutions (informal leadership of "git-men", "grypsers"), a specific code of rules obligatory within the walls of punitive and corrective institutions was taken out of the institutions and it provides basis for strong reciprocal bonds within the informal group solidarity.

were preserved from his pre-war activity in scout organization (Figure 2). He was also one of the founders (together with professor Maria Chmielowa and professor Stefan Flieger) of the Society of Alumni of Poznań Medical School.

Let the reminiscences involving one of professor Chróścielewski's activities, his passions, help to extend memory of this greatly deserving person not only for forensic medicine but also for Wielkopolska region.



Figure 2. Professor Edmund Chróścielewski's drawing from his pre-war activity in scout organization

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