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In memory of Mateusz Zygmunt Zatoński (1987-2022)

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On the 14th of May 2022, among members of family, colleagues, and friends, with immense sadness we said farewell to Dr. Mateusz Zatoński – dear Matteo – who passed away prematurely at the age of 34 on 17th of January this year in London, losing the fight against a very rare type of cancer. I would like to write a few words because we were co-workers at the Institute – European Observatory of Health Inequalities at Calisia University, in the editorial team of the “Journal of Health Inequalities” and the Health Promotion Foundation.

My history of work with Professor Witold Zatoński and friendship with his family began in 2001, so I remember Mateusz as a teenager. With great pleasure and admiration, I was able to observe his dynamic development and career, how this boy turned into a wise man, how he built friendships and the most important beautiful relationship of his life, how he entered his adult life, how he was successful in his work. Despite his young age, the list of his interests and achievements is remarkably long.

Doctor Mateusz Zygmunt Zatoński was one of the most talented scientists. In 2006, he started his studies at the University of Oxford. He continued his education in the Departments of History and Politics at the University of Glasgow, where he graduated with honours in both. At the same time, he was engaged in many activities. For a year he was an assistant to a Member of the British Parliament, and a journalist and editor of the scientific student journal “Slovo”. For a year he studied at the University of California in Berkeley, where he assisted Professor Jason Wittenberg in research on the history of Central Europe. He was the founder of the Polish Society of Students at the University of Glasgow. After graduating from Glasgow University, he graduated with honours from

Central and Southeastern Europe Studies at UCL – University College London, and then earned his Masters and PhD in History and Public Health, both from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. In 2019, he joined the University of Bath as a Research Fellow in the Tobacco Control Research Group. As part of this role, Mateusz contributed to research commissioned by the global regulator of the tobacco industry, STOP. Mateusz led a team researching the impact of the tobacco industry on health policy, both at the global and national levels, and developing ways to solve this problem.

While being a student, he very quickly found his place in research on the history of Poland, Central and Eastern Europe, and public health. He was a pioneer in researching the post-war history of activities to reduce the health burden of tobacco smoking in Poland and Eastern Europe and in building a bridge between knowledge on public health, especially tobacco and alcohol, and politics. For his doctorate, the promoters of which were Professor Martin McKee and Professor Martin Gorsky, which concerned the history of tobacco control in Poland, he was awarded the Roy Porter Prize of the Society for the History of Social Medicine. He was actively involved in the work of the Health Promotion Foundation and the vice president of the Foundation. He actively participated in projects in the field of public health carried out with many international institutions.

He was a brilliant scientist, an erudite. He was very fond of teaching students from all over the world. Some time ago, he became the promoter of his first doctoral dissertation at the University of Bath. In addition to Polish, he was fluent in English, as well as Italian, Czech, French, and Russian. He published extensively, with over 60 publications in peer-reviewed, high-

quality, prestigious scientific journals. He made a significant contribution to public health all over the world, but most of all in Central and Eastern Europe. He was posthumously awarded the World Health Organization World No Tobacco Day Award on the 24th of May 2022.

Working with Mateusz was a pleasure. Always politically correct, with a distance and positive attitude, creative, ambitious, smiling, humorous, but also warm

and friendly. In the last months of his life, despite his illness, Matteo did not change. He worked and lived his life to the fullest till the end. He left peacefully with his beloved wife and partner of 16 years, Dr. Aleksandra (Ola) Herbeć, by his side. This departure will forever be a huge and irreparable loss, not only for his relatives but also for a wide range of friends and academic colleagues.