Memories of Stefania Jabłońska

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Professor Stefania Jabłońska, a remarkable doctor, dermatologist, and scientist, passed away on May 8th, 2017. Professor Jabłońska was best known for her pioneering research on the viral aetiology of cervical cancer. It is to a large extent thanks to her work, conducted in collaboration with the world’s best laboratories, that medicine today possesses a set of tools for the control of cervical cancer, also in Poland. A letter I received on 2 July 2017 from Professor Harald zur Hausen, in which he points out “the remarkable achievements in cervical cancer reduction in Poland”, is a testament to Professor Jabłońska’s great legacy.

In this issue of Journal of Health Inequalities we invite you to read two contributions paying homage to Professor Stefania Jabłońska’s work. The first, written by Professor Harald zur Hausen and Dr. Ethel-Michele de Villiers, Stefania Jabłońska – some personal recollections (p. 13), places Professor Jabłońska’s work in an international context. The second, Remembering Professor Jabłońska (p. 14), is written by Professor Sławomir Majewski, who collaborated with Professor Jabłońska over the course of several decades.

Despite the progress achieved in cervical cancer control, much is still left to be done to build upon Professor Stefania Jabłońska’s legacy. We explored the problem of the persistently high toll of cervical cancer morbidity and mortality in Eastern Europe in last year’s issue of the Journal of Health Inequalities [1, 2].

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References
describe autoinoculation. In patients diagnosed with epithelial papillary dysplasia (Epidermodysplasia verruciformis), in whom material taken from a wart was transferred to an unoccupied surface of their body, development of warts was observed within a few dozen weeks.

In 1983, Professors zur Hausen and Gissmann identified type 16 human papillomavirus in a precancerous tumour of the reproductive system and two years later discovered the genetic material of the virus in cervical cancer cells. In 2008, Professor zur Hausen was awarded the Nobel Prize for the above discovery.

Professor Stefania Jabłońska is the author of many academic textbooks (including Skin Diseases), the promoter of 69 doctoral dissertations and 24 habilitation theses, and the educator of 15 professors. She is one of the most distinguished and most frequently cited Polish scientists.