

Eulogy for Professor Katarzyna Rostropowicz-Denisiewicz (1926–2020)



Professor Katarzyna Rostropowicz-Denisiewicz, the long-standing Head of the Developmental Age Rheumatology Clinic and Policlinic of the National Geriatrics, Rheumatology and Rehabilitation Institute in Warsaw, passed away on September 2nd, 2020.

She was born on April 15th, 1926, as a child of the teacher Helena Rostropowicz (née Barańska) and attorney-at-law Władysław Rostropowicz. During the German occupation she was a medical orderly with the Grey Ranks (*Szare Szeregi*) – the underground paramilitary Polish Scouting Association.

Prof. K. Rostropowicz-Denisiewicz passed her baccalaureate exam in July 1945 and began studying medicine at the Medical Faculty of the Medical University in Łódź. She finished her studies in 1950 and started to work in the State Antituberculosis Sanatorium in Łagiewniki – a present borough of the city of Łódź. At that time she married the military doctor and a renowned endocrinologist Rościstał Denisiewicz and gave birth to their only child – a son, Bogdan. She earned the medical doctor degree in 1952. In the years 1952–1954 she worked at the Children's and Neonatal Ward of the Hospital in Elbląg and in 1954 started her work at the outpatient clinic for children at Warszawa-Włochy. From 1956 she started to work simultaneously as a volunteer at the 2nd Children's Illnesses Clinic at the Medical Academy in Warsaw. She earned her 1st and 2nd degree specialization in pediatrics in 1959 and 1963 respectively.

Her professional career in the Institute of Rheumatology began in 1962 – the year the institute moved from its former headquarters at 58 Nowogrodzka St. in Warsaw, at the Jesus Child Hospital, to its present location at Spartańska St. The newly opened facilities included the Clinic and Policlinic of Childhood Rheumatology (which later changed its name to the Clinic and Policlinic of Developmental Age Rheumatology), headed by Prof. Edward Wilkoszewski. His team, which included two pediatricians working previously at Nowogrodzka St. – Zygmunt Łazowski and Irena Kozicka-Polakowa – was joined by several other specialists, including Katarzyna Rostropowicz-Denisiewicz.

The clinic consisted of 82 hospital beds and an outpatient clinic – with Professor Rostropowicz-Denisiewicz not only working in both facilities, but also being involved in the clinic's scientific work and giving lectures presented to pediatricians both in Warsaw and other parts of the country.

In 1968 she completed her doctoral dissertation and a post-doctoral dissertation in 1975. The latter concerned a clinical study of amyloidosis in children with rheumatic arthritis. In 1973 she acquired the specialty in rheumatology. After Prof. Wilkoszewski had retired in 1976, she became the head of the clinic she was working in – to remain at that post for the next 20 years, until her own retirement in 1996.

Prof. K. Rostropowicz-Denisiewicz received the Knight's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta in 1988, and in 1989 the State Council of the Republic of Poland conferred on her a professorial academic degree.

Prof. Katarzyna Rostropowicz-Denisiewicz was very much involved in the clinical work, assisting and supporting her younger colleagues in their work with child patients. She was a moving spirit behind the scientific work and research conducted in her clinic and paved the ways for the scientific co-operation both within the institute itself and with other Polish and international scientific centers. She was a renowned pediatric rheumatologist, an experienced clinician, and a recognized authority in her field of work.

Prof. K. Rostropowicz-Denisiewicz supervised specialty training of numerous future rheumatologists. She was also a supervisor of several PhD dissertations and a reviewer of PhD and post-doctoral theses. She published many scientific publications and was an author and an editor of medical textbooks.

After retiring from her post at the clinic, she worked for several years at the outpatient clinic of the institute.

Always curious about life, she enjoyed travelling the world, although her beloved place for recreation remained the town of Kazimierz by the Vistula river.

We pay our last respects to Professor Katarzyna Rostropowicz-Denisiewicz, whose fond memory we will keep in our hearts forever.

Lidia Rutkowska-Sak, Piotr Gietka