



**Brygida Białas, MD, PhD (1959-2020):
a pioneer of high-dose-rate
brachytherapy in Poland**

This August, after a long struggle with terminal illness, Brygida Białas passed away. The physician, the scientist, the brachytherapist. As very experienced in the field, she always found a way to use high-dose-rate brachytherapy. She was particularly keen on gynecological oncology and breast cancer. Every day, she treated patients with cervical and endometrial cancer, a number of them impossible to count. Her weapon of choice was the ring applicator. She introduced multicatheter accelerated partial breast irradiation and performed nearly half a thousand of implantations.

She started her oncology career in 1984, just after graduation from the Silesian School of Medicine in Katowice. She worked in the Gynecological Oncology Clinic of Maria Skłodowska-Curie Memorial Cancer Center and Institute in Gliwice. The head of the clinic, late Pawel Ratka MD, PhD, was very interested in the HDR brachytherapy, which was introduced in Gliwice in 1983 as the first in Poland. With him, Dr. Białas started to develop new treatment schedules for gynecological patients. In 1990, she went to Essen, Germany, for a one-year internship, and after her return, she was nominated the head of the Brachytherapy Unit. In 1997, she defended her PhD thesis on HDR brachytherapy fractionation in cervical cancer patients. Next, she organized a brachytherapy department as an independent element in the Institute structure. Soon after, many other procedures were introduced, including interstitial brachytherapy (prostate, head and neck, breast, penile), surface brachytherapy for skin cancer, endoluminal (bronchi, esophagus), and now obsolete, endovascular brachytherapy. Moreover, she co-authored over 30 publications in English and Polish (119 citations, h-index = 7, Scopus).

She was the mentor for many, including me. I met her at the brachytherapy department, where I came for four months to practice my skills as a radiotherapy resident. I knew nothing. Thanks to the „Boss”, as her team called her, I became so absorbed with brachytherapy that I stayed for the next ten years. And it is not over yet.

Thank you, Dr. Białas. Rest in Peace.



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