

NON OMNIS MORIAR

IN MEMORIAM PROFESSOR MARIOLA MARIA SULKOWSKA, MD, PhD (1959-2010)

MY COWORKER, WITH WHOM I SPENT 22 YEARS OF MY PROFESSIONAL LIFE;
– REMINISCENCES OF A WIFE, A MOTHER AND A HUMAN BEING.
HOW COULD THE TEXT BE WORDED ANY DIFFERENT, GIVEN THE UNDERSIGNED?

STANISŁAW SULKOWSKI

Motto

„The mysterious point where the sky touches the earth is only an illusion; the real horizon is the human being”

R. Mleczko

The above motto originating from a letter written by Professor Mariola Sulkowska to the Editorial Board of the “Medyk Białostocki” five years ago is a perfect synthesis of her attitude to her professional work, coworkers, friends, acquaintances and family. As long as I can remember, another human being was always the most important for her, be it someone from her immediate circle or – as it often happened – a completely unknown individual. A man perceived as a spiritual being and a man as a physical being. Perhaps this is why, when choosing her specialty 25 years ago, she decided on pathomorphology. Most assuredly, she selected the specialty absolutely knowingly, what greatly astonished her parents. Professor Sulkowska was extremely sensitive to the needs and suffering of others, always ready and willing to help anybody in need of such help. Her long-term illness did not prevent her from offering help to various individuals nor hinder her activity in various social organizations she collaborated with.

Professor Mariola Sulkowska was born in Warsaw on January 30, 1959. In the years 1977-1983, she was a student of the Medical Faculty, Medical Academy in Warsaw. Having graduated, she became employed by the Bielański Hospital of Warsaw-Żoliborz. In 1985, she became senior assistant in Department of Pathomorphology of the Medical Center of Postgraduate Education in Warsaw. At that time, her supervisor and mentor was the recently deceased late Professor Maria Kobuszewska-Faryna, with whom Professor Sulkowska maintained close and friendly ties, similarly as with colleagues and collaborators she met while working in Warsaw.

The year 1987 was the turning point in her life; while attending a pre-specialty course, she met her future husband. Already on October 1, 1988, she began working in Department of Pathological Anatomy, Medical Academy in Białystok, with



which her entire professional career was associated, unfortunately at the same time inseparably entwined with her 17-year long struggle with cancer. She was granted the title of Doctor of Medicine in 1991, Associate Professor in 1999, and Full Professor in 2003. These were the years of a difficult trial of her character, a trial from which she emerged victorious. This was also a period when she could experience both absolutely unselfishly given help of previously almost unknown colleagues from various parts of the country and – to say the least – indifference of some of those closest to her – her immediate coworkers.

Professor Mariola Sulkowska was a passionate teacher, highly valued by her students, to whom she was able not only to present pure theory, but above all to show the practical dimension of pathomorphology, so necessary for anyone wanting to be a physician and not a mere specialist in several disease entities. She was open and sensitive to the needs of her students, frequently advocating their rights. She was a Teacher of the kind that is increasingly difficult to find nowadays.

In spite of the fact that the mayor part of Professor Mariola Sulkowska's professional life was marred by her struggle with severe disease (or – possibly – because of the fact), she always found time and was willing to participate in numerous research projects, often as a team leader. She was capable of not only uniting her collaborators in working together to attain the set goal, but also – what is most important – of instilling in them faith in success. A humble reflection of her capabilities is her authorship and co-authorship of almost 400 papers published in Polish and foreign periodicals, her supervision of five completed doctoral dissertations, and numerous reviews she prepared, including reviews of reports submitted to foreign periodicals. Research projects she supervised led to her collaboration with such institutions

as the Sbarro Institute for Cancer Research and Molecular Medicine, Temple University Philadelphia, Kimmel Cancer Center, Thomas Jefferson University and Institute for Stem Cell and Regenerative Medicine, University of Washington.

She never received any ministerial awards, distinctions or medals, so commonly believed to be a measure of professional success. However, in her last year of life, she was distinguished in a particularly nice way and the distinction was much more pleasant due to its association with the very beginnings of her work. She received from Professor Aleksander Wasiutyński a commemorative medal “Founders of the Warsaw School of Pathological Anatomy”. Several months later, she passed away, unbeknown to almost all the circles of academic pathomorphology.

Yet she is treasured in memory of those, who were privileged to know her closer. A tangible expression of remembrance was found not in official wreaths, but in a multitude of single, small flowers that accompanied her in her last journey. Professor Mariola Maria Sulkowska will remain an epitome of a wonderful Human Being, Teacher and Educator, an example to be followed.

*Let us hasten to love others, they are gone so fast
.....
Do not be sure you have time, as uncertain certainty
Takes away our sensitivity, just as it takes away every
happiness*

Father Jan Twardowski