



Pro Memoriam

PROFESSOR WALDEMAR LECH OLSZEWSKI

1941–2020

Professor Waldemar Lech Olszewski, Honorary Member of Polish Society of Phlebology passed away on November 8th.

He was born on September 3, 1931 in Poland. Graduated in 1954, he passed Board in Surgery exams in 1962, received degrees of Doctor of Philosophy in 1962 and Doctor of Science in 1968. Since 1970 Olszewski has been an associate professor at the Department of Surgery of the Warsaw Medical Academy, and the Medical Research Center at Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. In 1978 he received a full professor degree at the same centers, and became chairman of the Clinical Department of Surgery, Ministry of Internal Affairs/Polish Academy of Science Hospital, Warsaw.

Professor Olszewski received postgraduate training at the Hammersmith Hospital in London from 1962 to 1963, then at Harvard Medical School in Boston, from 1968 to 1970. He worked at City Hospital, Warsaw, and then Dept. of Surgery, Medical Academy, and Medical Research Center, Warsaw as head of Department of Surgical Research & Transplantation and since 1997 as Chief of Clinical Department of Surgery, Ministry of Internal Affairs/Polish Academy of Sciences Hospital, Warsaw. Other professional positions include Visiting Professor at Radiumhospital-et, Oslo (since 1976), St. Bartholomew's Medical School, London (since 1994), Research Officer World Health Organization, Madras-Pondicherry-Benares, India (since 1992).

For over 50 years professor Olszewski carried out research on lymphatic system. He has made many important discoveries related to lymphatic system functioning. However professor Olszewski's clinical and research activities were not limited to lymphatic system and included vascular surgery, transplantation, physiology and surgery of the lymphatic system and immunology. His most important scientific contributions include designing and introducing into clinical practice the surgical lympho-venous shunts (1966), discovery of spontaneous rhythmic lymphatic contractility in humans (1980), proving that bacterial factor is responsible for development of human limb lymphedema (1994), introducing low-dose, long-term penicillin administration for prevention of chronic dermatitis and lymphangitis in Asian countries (1996), detecting the phenomenon of non-specific elimination of cell grafts (1990), preservation of tissues for transplantation in dehydrating sodium chloride (2003). In his last years devoted a lot of work to the fluid hydromechanics in tissue edema. Recently, he has developed a new method for treating lymphedema with the help of subcutaneously implanted silicone drains. He authored and co-authored five scientific books and over 600 research papers.

Professor Olszewski was a member of many national and international scientific societies and served as President of European Society for Surgical Research (1977–1978), International Society of Lymphology (1989–1991), Polish Society of Immunology (1995–1998).

He has received multiple awards and honors including: Doctor Honoris Causa-Universita di Genova (2005), Lymphatic Research Leadership Award (2006), Best Career Investigator Award from two American medical organizations – the National Lymphedema Network and the Lymphology Association of North America (2006), and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Phlebologie Rat-schow Medal (2012).

He conducted his research on lymphedema and lymphatic system with scientists from many countries worldwide including India, China, Egypt as well as Italy, Norway and the USA. His international scientific activities were validated with the Bene Merito Medal – by Polish Foreign Ministry for Contribution to World Medicine (2013).

We regret to say goodbye to Professor Olszewski, our teacher and mentor, and join in pain with his family.

Andrzej Szuba

*President, International Society of Lymphology
President of the Section of Lymphology
of the Polish Society of Phlebology
and Polish Society of Phlebology*