Professor Konstanty Wiśniewski, MD, PhD
(1935–2003)

OBITUARY

Professor Konstanty Wiśniewski passed away in the morning on 18th November 2003. We lost not only the outstanding scientist, but also the exceptional tutor, my Master and Teacher.

Professor Konstanty Wiśniewski was born on 4th February 1935 in Osnówka, Podlasie. He began his scientific career at the Department of Pharmacology in 1956 as a medical student. He graduated in 1960 and, thereafter, was employed at the same department of the Medical Academy in Białystok, where he advanced from assistant to professor.

In 1962, upon the presentation of doctoral dissertation entitled The influence of insulin on analgesic drugs activity he became a doctor of philosophy. Seven years later Professor Wiśniewski was promoted to assistant professor presenting the thesis The study on nonspecific transport activity of insulin. From 1966 to 1967, he worked as a fellow at the National Institutes of Health in the United States. In 1969, he was granted a position of a Head in Chief of the Department of Pharmacology and carried this position till the end of his life. In 1974,
Professor Wiśniewski was awarded a degree of associate professor and he became the first associate professor from the Medical Academy in Białystok. A degree of full professor was bestowed on him in 1979.

First of all, Professor Wiśniewski was an outstanding academic teacher, doing his job reliably and neatly. Rigorous Professor required from his students wide knowledge of pharmacology, but he was also very demanding of himself. Nevertheless, after years, he is remembered respectfully and gratefully. The same principles held true with respect to his assistants. Precision, regularity and diligence, these were our daily rules. Professor Wiśniewski liked very much to help people, especially when he was asked for it. He encouraged us to summarize every single day of laboratory work. As it turn out later, it was very profitable, because it allowed us to draw conclusions and further encouraged us to work. Today I also think highly of Professor Wiśniewski’s great abilities to teach young assistants how to write scientific papers and how to be critical of the whole available literature data. He has always emphasized that there is no good didactics without high level of scientific work.

Professor Wiśniewski is an author of many reissued books, e.g. *Pharmacodynamics* for pharmacy students, *The basics of pharmacology* for medical students and doctors, *Pharmacology* for students and nurses, *Pharmacology of allergic diseases* for doctors and students. His main scientific fields of interest were:
- radiopharmacology and radioprotection,
- the influence of peptide hormones, especially insulin on membrane transport and activity of drugs,
- the role of the protein degradation products in the central nervous system,
- the central activity of angiotensin and its degradation products,
- the influence of neuroleptics and their metabolites on post-ethanol cognition defect,
- collagen degradation products and their influence on the central nervous system,
- the role of nitric oxide in the activity of neuroleptics and amino acids,
- the influence of peptide hormones of the digestive tract on circulation in diabetic patients, the participation of sympathetic nervous system and nitric oxide in these processes.

Research conducted by Professor Wiśniewski demonstrated that some phosphoorganic compounds act as radioprotective agents. He discovered that products of protein degradation, produced by restricted proteolysis, had new surprising biological properties, acting on basic brain functions or homeostasis. Up-to-dateness and importance of these results have been confirmed annually by the citation index. For these results, he was honored by the Scientific Secretary of the Medical Science Faculty of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Minister of Health and President of Medical Academy in Białystok. Professor Wiśniewski was also awarded the American Diabetological Society Prize for the studies on the transport properties of insulin.

Undoubtedly, Professor Wiśniewski created the current Białystok school of pharmacology. He was a professor conferring doctor's degree on 45 postgraduate students and assistants of whom the following doctors of philosophy: A. Bodzenta, W. Buczko, J. Braszko, M. Borawska, R. Fiedorowicz, S. Sierakowski, W. Sobaniec and A. Szmyński, became assistant professors. Also under his supervision J. Moniuszko-Jakoniuk, D. Koćmierska-Grodzka, F. Rogowski and M. Winnicka got the same degree. Eight of his assistant professors are currently the full professors.

The Professor's organizing and political activities are also worth mentioning. He was a member of Provincial and Central Committee of the Polish United Working-Class Party. For six years Professor Wiśniewski was a chairman of the Experimental Pharmacology Commission of the Physiology Committee, Polish Academy of Sciences, and for fourteen years, he was a chairman of the Drug Committee of the Health and Social Care Department. Professor Wiśniewski was a founding member of the Polish Pharmacological Society. Several times he was a chairman of the Białystok branch of our society. He organized many conferences and scientific meetings, including the X Conference of the Polish Pharmacological Society held in 1989 and the Meeting of Polish and German Pharmacologists in Białowieża in 1978. Thanks to Professor Wiśniewski, pharmacologists from eastern and western Europe met in our country to make scientific contacts and friendships important for the future. Surely, this meeting was one step forward to make Berlin Wall collapse. From 1972 to 1974, Professor Wiśniewski worked as Dean of the Medical Faculty and from 1974 to 1981 as a Rector of the Medical Academy.
in Białystok, which was a period of very dynamic development of the Academy. The Faculty of Pharmacy was established, new dormitory and gymnasium were built, the construction of the Anatomical Pathology and Forensic Medicine Units were finished and Pediatric Clinic started to grow. Professor took always care of having good contacts with neighboring medical universities in Hrodno (Belorus) and Kaunas (Lithuania). Long-term contracts were signed and friendships were made. Today it seems that Professor Wiśniewski was the pioneer of cooperation within the Niemen Euroregion.

He was repeatedly decorated for his scientific and didactic activity. He was awarded many national and regional prizes and medals, including the Knight Cross of the Polonia Restituta Order, Gold Cross of Merit, Golden Distinction for Merit of Białystok, Medal of National Education Commission and Distinction for Merit of Health Service.

In our memory Professor Wiśniewski will remain a great pharmacologist, Professor of Medical Academy in Białystok, teacher and tutor of many generations of medical doctors, dentists, doctors of philosophy and professors, the creator of the Białystok school of pharmacology.

On a sunny Saturday, 22nd of November we escorted Professor Wiśniewski to the Urban Cemetery in Białystok, but we will keep him in our memory forever.

Włodzimierz Buczko, MD, PhD