

Professor Władysław Dobrzaniecki (1897–1941) and his contribution to the development of otorhinolaryngology

Profesor Władysław Dobrzaniecki (1897–1941) i jego wkład w rozwój otorynolaryngologii

Antoni Bruzgielewicz¹, Robert Bartoszewicz¹, Walentyna Krupowies², Kazimierz Niemczyk¹

'University and Hospital Department of Otorhinolaryngology, Head and Neck Surgery, Medical University of Warsaw, Poland; Head: prof. Kazimierz Niemczyk MD PhD

²Siedlce University of Natural Sciences and Humanities, Poland

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ABSTRACT:	Many eminent surgeons provided excellent foundations for the establishment and development of otorhinolaryngology, head and neck surgery. One of them was professor Władysław Dobrzaniecki. Of the 66 items written by W. Dobrzaniecki, 26 works concerned issues related to the head and neck. These works show that the main topic was plastic surgery, both aesthetic and reconstructive after extensive oncological operations. The scientific and professional career of such a talented surgeon was suddenly interrupted. At the age of 44, he was murdered by the Nazis, in Lviv on July 4, 1941, along with other professors.
KEYWORDS:	history of medicine, otorhinolaryngology, Władysław Dobrzaniecki

STRESZCZENIE:

Wielu wybitnych chirurgów stworzyło doskonałe podwaliny do powstania, a następnie rozwoju otorynolaryngologii, chirurgii głowy i szyi. Jednym z nich był profesor Władysław Dobrzaniecki. Pośród 66 pozycji napisanych przez W. Dobrzanieckiego 26 jest poświęconych zagadnieniom w obrębie głowy i szyi. Z publikacji tych wynika, że głównym tematem była chirurgia plastyczna, zarówno estetyczna, jak i rekonstrukcyjna po rozległych operacjach onkologicznych. Kariera naukowa i zawodowa tak zdolnego chirurga została nagle przerwana. 4 lipca 1941 r. w wieku 44 lat, wraz z innymi profesorami, został on zamordowany przez Niemców we Lwowie.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: historia medycyny, otorynolaryngologia, Władysław Dobrzaniecki

Professor Władysław Dobrzaniecki was one of many surgeons who made a significant contribution to the development of otorhinolaryngology, in particular plastic surgery in the area of the head and neck region. He is regarded as the precursor of plastic surgery in the inter-war period [1]. At the age of 44, he was murdered along with other professors by the Germans with active (and hard to dispute) participation of Ukrainian nationalists in Lviv on July 4, 1941 [2]. We will try to introduce the figure of this distinguished scholar to a wider community of otorhinolaryngologists, present his scientific achievements in the field of otorhinolaryngology.

Władysław Dobrzaniecki was born on September 24, 1897 in Zielinka near Borszczów in the territory of present-day Ukraine [3–5]. A former resident of Zielinka recollects the village at that time as follows [6]: "Zielinka was not a large village, but it had over 100 house addresses. The residents gave names to the different parts of the village: near windmill, near chapel, earthworks.

Peasant homesteads were concentrated along small, narrow paths; located on the right side of the Niczława river, in the northern part, they progressed, through a small wooden bridge, in the direction of the village Piłatkowce... The best-known Pole of the inter-war period born in my home village Zielinka was professor of surgery at the John Casimir University in Lviv, physician Władysław Dobrzaniecki".

He studied medicine at the University of Lviv, where he received the title of doctoris medicinae universae. After Poland's rebirth in 1918, its borders came under threat from the east; among defenders of Lviv were pupils and students called "Orlęta Lwowskie" (Lviv Eaglets). At the age of 21, W. Dobrzaniecki was actively engaged in defending Lviv as it was besieged by Ukrainian army [7].

A lot of valuable information about the scientific and professional life of Władysław Dobrzaniecki and his work at the Department

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Fig. 1. A photo from early 1920s outside the Department in Lviv: sitting in the first raw on the right is Ryszard Rodziński, standing behind him in a military uniform is Henryk Hilarowicz, sitting on the left is Władysław Dobrzaniecki [12].



Fig. 2. Prof. Hilary Schramm surrounded by three student surgeons: (from the left) doctor Władysław Dobrzaniecki, doctor Henryk Hilarewicz, doctor Adam Gruca [8].

of Surgery can be learnt from memories of Professor Stanisław Laskownicki in his book "Szpada, bagnet, lancet" [8]. Already as a student, W. Dobrzaniecki's interests were focused on surgery. As a fourth-year student, first as a voluntary and then as a junior assistant in 1923, he started work at the Department of Surgery under Professor Hilary Schramm, who created a unique atmosphere at the department, encouraging co-workers to pursue scientific development, go abroad, publish research and deliver papers at conventions (Fig. 1.). It is important to stress that back then the whole scientific and surgical development depended on and concentrated around the person of the head - in most cases, the only professor of surgery at a given department. He determined the character and direction of the research, set priorities and decided on almost everything that concerned the department and its staff. He was virtually an oracle – his authority and power was inconceivable from today's perspective [9]. Initially, Dobrzaniecki was acquiring his surgical skills as a voluntary at the Department under doctor Jerzy Mostowy, who later in life worked in Brzeżany and Tarnopol [4, 5]. Shortly after receiving his diploma, at the 21st Convention of Polish Surgeons in Lviv in July 1924 Władysław Dobrzaniecki presented his probably first study "O sympaticektomji okołonaczyniowej na podstawie materiału Kliniki Chirurgicznej Lwowskiej" [On perivascular sympathicectomy based on the material of the Department of Surgery in Lviv] [10]. This shows the level of trust placed in the young adept of the surgical art by the Head of the Department. Employed full-time at the Department, he honed his surgical skills under and with the support of Stanisław Laskownicki, who later became Professor and Head of the University and Hospital Department of Urology In Krakow [3, 8].

During his assistantship Władysław Dobrzaniecki visited numerous Departments in Europe: England, Austria, France, Germany and Switzerland. He presented his observations and reflections from those trips in a lengthy account in Polska Gazeta Lekarska (Polish Medical Gazette) [11]. His good knowledge of foreign languages allowed him to easily establish numerous social and scientific connections, draw on the knowledge and experience of his peers from abroad.

In 1931, on the return from France, he defended his postdoctoral thesis (praca habilitacyjna) titled "Obecny stan chirurgii układu współczulnego" [Present state of surgery of the sympathetic nervous system] at the John Casimir University in Lviv with Professor H. Schramm as his supervisor. The postdoctoral thesis was written in Strasbourg under Professor Rene Leriche. It was published in Polski Przegląd Chirurgiczny (Polish Surgical Review) as work created at the above-mentioned facility in France [13]. After Professor H. Schramm retired in 1932, Professor Tadeusz Ostrowski became the Head of the Department (Fig. 2.). W. Dobrzaniecki worked under Professor T. Ostrowski until 1936 when he took on an independent position of the Head of the Department of Paediatric Surgery at the Saint Zofia Children Hospital in Lviv. In 1938, he was appointed titular professor of surgery [3]. In the same year, he became the Head of the Department of Surgery of the National Public Hospital.

At the Faculty of Medicine, W. Dobrzaniecki taught classes in general surgery, transplantation, practical classes in application of fixing dressings, a course in operations using corpses, and from the 1935/1936 academic year — also classes in paediatric surgery [14–18]. Dobrzaniecki's lectures were very popular, as he was a naturally gifted speaker. His lectures and scientific papers were stylistically immaculate and delivered with great eloquence and perfect diction [8].

Following the invasion of Poland by Germany, many doctors heroically fulfilled their professional and patriotic duty. It was especially surgeons who made their mark, having their hands full with so many injured. In that difficult time, Władysław Dobrzaniecki provided assistance to civilians and Polish soldiers with great dedication. Based on memories of Professor Andrzej Gruca, Tomasz Cieszyński accounts that W. Dobrzaniecki worked at that time at the Sixth District Hospital of Social Security at 31 Kurkowa Street, which was renamed Military Hospital No 604 following reports

about the German aggression, and at the Military District Hospital at 26 Łyczakowska Street. According to other sources, his activity in that period was mainly concentrated in the Public Hospital [19]. It is possible that such an eminent surgeon was summoned and provided assistance to victims of the aggression in all of the three facilities.

On September 17, 1939, violating the binding Polish-Soviet non--aggression pact, Red Army invaded the territory of the Republic of Poland, thereby implementing the arrangements contained in the secret protocol of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, and entered Lviv on September 22, 1941. During the first Soviet occupation, from September 22, 1939 to June 27, 1941, all Polish institutions were dissolved. At the beginning of October, the John Casimir University reopened and was renamed Ivan Franko University to comply with formal Ukrainisation. The Faculty of Theology was dissolved, and the Faculty of Medicine and the Faculty of Pharmacy were administratively separated from the other units to form the State Medical Institute. As part of the Faculty of Medicine, the Department of Hospital Surgery was established based on the Public Hospital, and Professor Władysław Dobrzaniecki was appointed the Head. [20]. Practically all lectures in medicine, in theoretical divisions and departments held by Polish professors were delivered in the Polish language. Only Marxism and Leninism were taught in the Ukrainian language by doctor Zaszkilniak, who was brought from Kiev [21].

Following the Soviet occupation that lasted around a year and 9 months, on the night from June 30 to July 1, 1941, three days after the flight of the soviet army, Germans entered Lviv. On July 2, Germans arrested Professor Kazimierz Bartel at the Lviv Polytechnic. During the night from the 3rd to 4th July, the SS and Gestapo formations arrested a group of 22 professors (the 23rd person arrested was Professor Franciszek Groer, paediatrician, who was released after interrogation and so managed to survive) of the John Casimir University, the Lviv Polytechnic and the Academy of Veterinary Sciences in Lviv, some of them along with their wives and sons and other relatives; they were executed at the break of day on July 4 in the Wólka Hills. Among them there were 12 professors of the Faculty of Medicine. These were: Antoni Cieszyński (stomatologist), Władysław Dobrzaniecki (surgeon), Jan Grek (general practitioner) along with his wife, Jerzy Grzędzielski (ophthalmologist), Henryk Hilarowicz (surgeon), Stanisław Mączewski (gynaecologist), Witold Nowicki (anatomicopathologist) along with his son, Tadeusz Ostrowski (surgeon) along with his wife, Stanisław Progulski (paediatrician) along with his son, Roman Rencki (general practitioner), Włodzimierz Sieradzki (court medic), Adam Sołowij (gynaecologist) along with his grandchildren [22]. According to S. Laskownicki, Professor W. Dobrzaniecki died because a replacement for him, docent Małys, was already chosen under the pressure of Ukrainians in 1940 [8].

This is how Dr. Zbigniewem Kostecki, former chairman of the Congress of Polonia in Germany, whose father was in professor Władysław Dobrzaniecki's home during his arrest and was executed, recounts those tragic days: "My mother was a housekeeper of an eminent professor of surgery, Władysław Dobrzaniecki. He was a bachelor, aged 44, lived in a posh 8-bedroom flat. Elegant,



Fig. 3. Copy of the work with a dedication (from the author's collection).

stylish. On that day, his friend, Tadeusz Tapkowski, a lawyer with PnD in law, came around. My mother, as I already mentioned, was his housekeeper, and my father came to take her home or to visit her. Suddenly, German police entered and wanted to take everybody with them because they had been given an order to do so. My mother was seven month pregnant with me. The sight of her pregnancy softened the heart of the Gestapo member in charge of the soldiers. My wife is pregnant as well, he said to my mother and told her to hide. But the men were driven away. The following day, in the Wólka Hills, they were separated: the servants were told to go to the left, and professors – to the right. My father did not know the German language, he was mistaken for a professor, maybe he was dressed too well. He didn't manage to explain the mistake, they wouldn't listen to him. That's how he was put in front of the firing squad. My mother learnt about that from the surviving witnesses. I was born two months later, and I have to say that murder left a mark on me. From my early childhood, mum would endlessly talk about those events and about the beauty of Lviv..." [23].

The arrests were continuation of the campaign conducted by Germans against Polish elites; irrespective of German intentions, the arrests undoubtedly fitted in with Ukrainian nationalists' genocidal plans to "cleanse" the "primevally Ukrainian" land of the "foreign" element in order to build the "Samostijna" (Independent Ukraine). There were also purely material motivations behind the murder, with all kinds of valuables stolen during the arrests and flats and houses seized. The flat of Professor Władysław Dobrzaniecki was occupied by a Ukrainian doctor, Wrzeciono – a brother of the commandant of the Ukrainian police in Lviv [24].

Despite his short professional life, Professor W. Dobrzaniecki left behind quite a collection of scientific papers printed in various Polish and foreign journals in the Polish, English, French, German and Italian languages. The author is a proud owner of a copy of his work in the Italian language "Sulla resezione della mandibola e sua restaurazione" published in Archivo Italiano Chirurgia in 1933 (Fig. 3.).

The copy has a handwritten dedication by the author to Dr. A. Musiał. The doctor was found out to be Albin Musiał, ophthalmologist and head at the Saint Zofia Children Hospital in Lviv [4, 5, 25].

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Fig. 4. Władysław Dobrzaniecki senior assistant at the Department of Surgery of the John Casimir University in Lviv (1927) [8].

Tomasz Cieszyński writes in his work that of the important documents about Professor Władysław Dobrzaniecki, only a collection of his articles survived and is, as stated by the author of the 1990 "Album Chirurgów Polskich" (Album of Polish surgeons), in possession of (late) Professor Z. Jeziora [3, 26]. The author probably had access to that collection, hence he gives the exact number of printed papers and their list. The list does not include the work from 1942, which came out after the professor had been murdered and probably was not part of the collection of papers: Dobrzaniecki W, Haak E. Meningocele spinalis traumatica spuria. Ann Surg., 1942; 116(1): 150–153 [27].

Of the 66 items, 26 papers are dedicated to issues related to the head and neck [3]:

- 1. Modyfikacja plastyki odstających uszu [Modification of the plastic surgery of protrusive ears]. Pol Gaz Lek, 1925; 4(35–36): 753–757.
- 2. Modyfikacja operacji wytwórczej uszu odstających [Modification of the plastic surgery of protrusive ears]. Pol Przegl Chir, 1925; 4: 126.
- 3. Modification de l'operation plastique des oreilles ecartees. Paris Chirurgical, 1926; 5: 191.
- 4. Rzadsze schorzenia chirurgiczne nosowej części gardła jako też sposoby leczenia tychże [Less common surgical diseases of the nasal area of the throat as well as ways of treating them]. Pol Przegl Chir, 1927; 6(3): 410.
- 5. Ein Beitrag zur Pathologie und Chirurgie des Epipharynx. Zrtb Chir, 1926; 53(46): 2898–2904.
- 6. Postępowanie przy leczeniu czyraków a w szczególności czyraków twarzy [Procedure for treating furuncles, in particular face furuncles]. Prakt Lek, 1927; 1: 44.
- 7. O tzw. aktinomykoma policzka [On so-called chick actinomycosis]. Pol Gaz Lek, 1927; 6(41): 768–770.
- 8. Uber das sogenannte Aktinomycom der Wange. Schweiz Med. Wchschr, 1928; 51: 1261.
- 9. Chirurgia plastyczna i estetyczna twarzy [Plastic and aesthetic surgery of the face]. Pol Gaz Lek, 1928; 7(28): 519–524.
- Chirurgie plastique et esthetique du visage. Paris Chirurgical, 1928; 20: 129.

- 11. Cieszyński A., Dobrzaniecki W.: Dwa przypadki nowotworów żuchwy w okolicy brody. Zastąpienie ubytków kości po operacji przyrządami ortopedycznymi i droga plastyki [Two cases of mandible tumours in the chin area. Replacing postsurgery bone loss with orthopaedic appliances and the path of plastic surgery]. Polska Dentystyka, 1929; 7(1).
- 12. Sur les anomalies rares des oreilles et le traitement operatoire de certaines d'elles. Ann d'Maladies de l'oreille, du larynx, du nez et du pharynx, 1929; 48(10): 998–1003.
- 13. Nowsze zabiegi wytwórcze w zakresie ruchomej części nosa [Newer plastic surgery procedures on the moveable part of the nose]. Pol Przegl Chir, 1929; 8(3): 342–348.
- 14. Restoration of the sub-septal portion of the nose. Ann Surg, 1929; 90(7): 974–977.
- 15. La restauration de la sous cloison du nez par une methode combinee. Paris Chirur, 1929; 21: 207.
- 16. Plastyki twarzy [Plastic surgery of the face]. Pol Stom., 1931; 9: 271.
- 17. Plastic surgery of the face. Revue Chirur Plastique, 1931; 3: 1–19.
- 18. Rozpoznawanie i leczenie świeżych złamań nosa [Diagnosis and treatment of recent nose fractures]. Praktyk Lek, 1931; 5: 40.
- 19. Dobrzaniecki W, Michałowski E.: Influence de la suppression de l'excretion de la parotide sur la glycoregulation. Lyon Chirur, 1931; 28(5): 571–579.
- 20. Ostrowski T., Dobrzaniecki W.: Paralysie faciale peripherique traitee par la gangliectomie cervicale. J Chirurgie Par, 1935; 45: 16–29.
- 21. Ostrowski T., Dobrzaniecki W.: Obwodowe porażenie nerwu twarzowego leczone przez wycięcie szyjnego zwoju współczulnego [Peripheral paralysis of the facial nerve treated by cutting out the cervical sympathetic ganglion]. Pol Przegl Chir, 1935; 14(6): 793–799.
- 22. Sulla resezione della mandibola e sua restaurazione. Archivo Ital Chirurgia, 1933; 35(2): 207–217.
- 23. Dobrzaniecki W., Sowiakowski J.: Les tumeurs de l'orbite. J Chirurgie, 1933; 42(2): 201–221.
- 24. Le nez bull-dog. J Chirurgie, 1936; 48: 191.
- 25. Dobrzaniecki W., Stankiewicz S.: Nowotwór szyji wychodzący z pnia współczulnego (neuroma gangliecellulare) u 2-letniego dziecka [Neck tumour coming out of the sympathetic trunk (neuroma gangliecellulare) in a two-year-old child]. Pol Stom Przeg Dent, 1936; 14: 1.
- 26. Tumeur du cou et du mediastin anterieur de provenance sympatique (ganglioneurome). J Chirurgie, 1936; 48: 785.

The tiles of these articles show that the main subject was plastic surgery, both aesthetic and reconstructive one after extensive oncological operations.

Profesor Władysław Dobrzaniecki continuously developed his scientific and professional skills, passed on his expertise to other doctors. During nearly 5 years of being a head (1936–1941), the professor educated 17 surgeons who later held managerial positions in the country and abroad [25].

As there are few memories left about Professor Władysław Dobrzaniecki, let me cite, after Professor T. Cieszyński, the memories of those who remembered him: "As reported by many people who

knew him directly, Professor Dobrzaniecki showed a huge charisma and profound spirituality. Surgery was the passion of his life. His always active approach to the issues of surgery and scientific research rubbed off on others and were a strong stimulating factor. As far as his other interests were concerned, dramatics and

music were his favourite" [3]. We should add to those memories that W. Dobrzaniecki was of average height, well-built, had very dark hair, green eyes shaded by long black lashes, beautifully defined dark eyebrows and a nice, straight nose (Fig. 4.). He was very clever, ambitious and hard-working [8].

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Corresponding author: Antoni Bruzgielewicz MD PhD; University and Hospital Department of Otorhinolaryngology, Head and Neck Surgery, Medical University of Warsaw, Poland; Banacha street 1a, 02-097 Warsaw, Poland; Phone: +48 22 599 25 21, +48 22 599 17 21; E-mail: a.bruzgielewicz@wp.pl

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