

Poznan University of Medical Sciences, 1950–2019

History and the luminaries of science

Summary

The aim of this book is to chronicle the history of Poznan University of Medical Sciences (PUMS) from 1950 to 2018. On the one hand, the authors strive to present the reasons taken in 1950 to detach the faculties of Medicine and Pharmacy from Poznan University and set up a new institution under the name Poznan Medical Academy. On the other, they outline the development and achievements of the Academy, thanks to which, in 2007, this institution attained the status of a University of Medical Sciences. The book is both chronological and topic-related, which is influenced by important events in Poland's recent history, and also by current policy in the field of science and higher education. This is reflected in the book's structure, which comprises seven chapters. The early days of the Medical Academy in Poznań are described, first as part of the Poznan Society of the Friends of the Sciences between 1867 and 1918, and next through the opening of Poznan University Faculty of Pharmacy and Faculty of Medicine, along with their development between 1920 and 1949 (*Chapter I*). One important figure for medicine in Poznań was Prof. Heliodor Świącicki, a gynaecologist and the first rector of Poznan University (UP). It is thanks to his efforts and those of the first dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Prof. Adam Wrzosek, that the University was able to establish this faculty in 1920. By bringing Prof. Konstanty Hrynakowski to Poznań from Stockholm, Professor Świącicki was instrumental in initiating pharmacy studies at Poznan University in 1919, which laid the foundations for the Faculty of Pharmacy in 1947. The remarkable development of medicine and pharmacy in Poznań was only interrupted by the outbreak of the Second World War. As a result of the Nazi German invasion and Soviet occupation, the material output and resources in medicine and pharmacy were almost entirely destroyed, while dozens of doctors and pharmacists employed at the University lost their lives. Despite this repression, Poznań doctors and pharmacists continued to teach students throughout the war. Education took place at the clandestine University of the Western Lands in Warsaw (1940–1945), and also the Polish Faculty of Medicine in Edinburgh (1941–1945). In January 1945, while the battle for Poznań raged on, the decision was made to rebuild Poznan University and restore medical and pharmacy studies within its walls.

The end of World War II, along with the communists' seizure of power in Poland in 1948, marked the start of a new stage in the history of Poznan Medical Academy. There was a change in Poland's political system and also in the direction of higher education. One of the results was the opening of the Poznan Medical Academy on 1 January 1950, which changed

its name three months later. This institution was based on the departments and units from the Faculty of Medicine with the dentistry division and the Faculty of Pharmacy carved out of Poznan University. There were two reasons for setting up a medical studies institution. One was to rebuild the country, which had sustained huge material and population losses between 1939 and 1945, as well as suffering from a severe lack of qualified medical staff. The other reason was something of an ideological project on the part of the communist authorities to create separate medical universities in post-war Poland. Separating off the sphere of higher education in medicine made it possible to subordinate the health care sector and its university structure. The Medical Academy's growth between 1950 and 1956, during the Stalinist period, primarily entailed the rebuilding and expansion of the university's material resources, as detailed in *Chapter II*.

Poland was an exceptional country in the Eastern Bloc, because the Sovietization of political and socio-economic life progressed at a slower pace, hindering neither the growth of higher education between 1956 and 1980 nor scientific and clinical research. One of the greatest achievements of the time was making Poznań the site of Europe's premier orthopaedics and rehabilitation centre. Headed by its founder, Prof. Wiktor Dega, it became Europe's leading centre for fighting polio and for implementing ideas for the treatment and rehabilitation of disabled people. The political thaw of October 1956 gave further impetus to more far-reaching organisation changes, as a result of which procedures for the democratic election of university authorities were reinstated. Prof. Antoni Horst was elected rector of Poznan Medical Academy, while faculty board members chose deans and vice-deans. One significant decision for the Academy was to assume control of state clinical hospitals, which made it possible to boost the quality of medical students' education and to intensify clinical research. This period of growth at the Academy lasted until 1980 and is described in *Chapter III*. The 1960s and 1970s saw an increase in the number of research fields at Poznan Medical Academy and an expansion in the scope of medical education. Poznan Medical Academy was the country's first to have an Electron Microscopy Centre (1956), Isotopes Centre (1957), Dialysis Unit (1958), Dietetics Centre (1959), Parasitic Diseases Clinic (1961), Industrial Rehabilitation Unit (1968), and a Hand Surgery Clinic (1969). This enhanced role of scientific research led to the founding of research institutes in 1969. It was acknowledged that the numerous new tasks required of students in these tumultuous times of scientific development could be implemented more effectively and easily through larger, integrated organisational units - institutes. This period also saw improvements in the level of teaching. There was a willingness to expand higher education and make it easier for medical personnel to study at the university level. In 1975, in addition to degree courses in medicine, dentistry and pharmacy, a fourth course, nursing, was set up at the newly established Faculty of Nursing. Another sign of the Academy's prosperity was the decision to expand it. Thanks to the efforts of the rectors at that time — Prof. Antoni Horst, Prof. Wiktor Dega, Prof. Olech Szczepski, Prof. Witold Michałkiewicz, and Prof. Roman Góral — the Academy succeeded in acquiring a square plot bordered by four streets — Stanisława Przybyszewskiego, Marcełińska, Polna, and Karola Świerczewskiego streets (today Bukowska street), which would later become the Poznan University of Medical Sciences campus. However, following this short period of academic freedom, restrictions were once again imposed, with the Polish United Workers' Party exerting a growing influence on the Academy's development. This led to the resignation of its rector, Prof. Horst, and later Prof. Dega. The consequence of authoritarian rule in Poland was the events of March 1968 and December 1970. There can be no doubt that these led to reduced freedom for universities and escalated conflicts in Polish society,

culminating in the emergence of the Independent Self-governing Trade Union Solidarity in 1980. Workers' meetings were also organised at Poznan Medical Academy in mid-September 1980, during which the first democratic elections for the workers' trade union were held. This gathering of over 300 Academy employees took place in the Stefan Różycki Lecture Hall at the Collegium Anatomicum.

The effect of 1980's 'Solidarity outbreak' was the democratization of Polish universities, including Poznan Medical Academy. After a 20-year break, elections of the Academy authorities were organised once again; Prof. Jerzy Wójtowicz was elected rector, and docent Jacek Łuczak became the dean of the Faculty of Medicine. Unfortunately, the declaration of martial law on 13 December 1981 put an end to this autonomy. The political and, above all, the economic repercussions of martial law arrested the Academy's development. The lack of investment in the teaching and clinical facilities at a time when student numbers were rising generated difficult conditions for work and research for the entire academic community. This unfortunately, translated into unsatisfactory effects of the teaching process. From this point of view, the 1980s could be described as a lost decade (this period is chronicled in *Chapter IV*). Luckily, it did not turn out to be lost in terms of research conducted at the Academy. Rector Prof. Wójtowicz's fears of international sanctions, which would have meant the Medical Academy dropping out of transnational circulation in research, proved unfounded. The network of international contacts it had built up during the previous 10 years enabled the Academy to grow from the mid-1980s onwards. Another significant event was the Academy Senate's decision of 15th December 1981 to take Karol Marcinkowski, the renowned Poznań doctor, community worker, and patriot, as its patron. The state authorities only sanctioned this decision in 1984.

1989 marked one of the important turning points in post-war Europe and also in Poland, which once more became a free country. *Chapter V* and *Chapter VI* discuss events at the Academy from 1989 to 2018. Under the leadership of its rector, Prof. Antoni Pruszewicz, from the very beginning of the transformation, the Academy authorities adopted the principle of autonomy and extremely active policy of research, teaching and organisation. The result of this was to raise the level of education even further and to increase the quality and quantity of both scientific research and medical services. One way to achieve these goals was by dividing the Faculty of Medicine, which would soon be transformed into Faculty of Medicine II. The Postgraduate Medical Studies Department and Medical Programme in English – the first of its kind in Poland to educate English-speaking medical students, mainly from the USA – became part of this faculty. Moreover, the Faculty of Medicine was renamed Medical Faculty I, and in 1998 the Faculty of Nursing became the Faculty of Health Sciences, expanding the courses it offered. This improved the Academy's financial situation, and also resulted in growth in new investments in teaching, research, and clinical facilities. The end result was better-quality education and research. This enabled the Academy to use the possibilities afforded by the Law on Higher Education, and, on 27 February 2007, to transform into (Karol Marcinkowski) Poznan University of Medical Sciences (PUMS). In doing so, it became the first medical academy in Poland to acquire the status of a university.

The recent decade at Poznan University of Medical Sciences has been one of dynamic growth, with it ranking among the best such institutions in Poland. The university now has approximately 8,000 students, 1,000 of whom are enrolled in the English-speaking programme and come from more than 50 countries. A greater number of degree courses are offered as well. In addition to MD, pharmacy, dentistry, and nursing, a total of 22 courses are now available at PUMS, including the following: midwifery, physiotherapy, electroradiology,

emergency medical services, occupational therapy, medical analytics, cosmetology, medical biotechnology, dietetics. In addition, neurobiology is taught by professors from four institutions that grew out of what was once Poznan University. The infrastructure of PUMS has expanded to take in new buildings located on its campus. In 2004, the new architecturally superb Faculty of Dentistry building, Collegium Stomatologicum, at 70 Bukowska St. was completed. In 2007, work was finished on the Teaching and Congress Centre, complete with the Main Library at 37 Przybyszewskiego St., while 2014 saw the opening of the University Centre for Medical Biology at 8 Rokietnicka St. Perhaps the pinnacle of Poznan University of Medical Sciences' decades-long history was the opening of the new Centre for Medical Simulation at 7 Rokietnicka St., which took place on 7 November 2018. This building was named after the first dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Prof. Adam Wrzosek, who founded the tradition of medical studies in Poznań in 1920. It was a symbolic event, honouring one of the architects of the Poznań tradition of university education in medicine almost 100 years later. A further 30 eminent professors and doctors who were instrumental in developing Poznan University of Medical Sciences are commemorated in the final chapter of this book (*Chapter VIII*). In the biographies of these luminaries, their students and co-workers provide a comprehensive portrayal of their esteemed masters and teachers.

Translated by Rob Pagett