

COOPERATION BETWEEN MEDICAL UNIVERSITIES IN WROCLAW, POLAND AND TERNOPIL, UKRAINE, 2009 – 2016

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1. Wrocław Medical University – our roots

In 1811, Friedrich Wilhelm the Third, King of Prussia, moved an old (erected in 1506) but decaying *Protestant Universität Viadrina* from Frankfurt am Oder to Breslau (Wrocław) and joined it with Catholic *Academia Leopoldina* (erected in 1702). The newly established university, *Friedrich-Wilhelm Universität*, was composed of 5 faculties: Catholic theology, Protestant theology, law, medicine, and philosophy; the last one comprised all modern sciences like geography, history, modern and classic philology, music, mathematics, agriculture etc.

From its very beginning the Faculty of Medicine was an eminent and worldwide influential scientific center. Among the most notable scientists, often pioneers of their specialties, first of all should be mentioned (in an alphabetical order): Alois Alzheimer, Leopold Auerbach, Ferdinand Julius Cohn, Paul Ehrlich (Nobel Prize Winner, 1908), Jan von Mikulicz-Radecki, Oskar Minkowski, Albert Neisser, Carl Prausnitz, Jan Evangelista Purkyně, and Carl Wernicke. Up until the Nazi time the nationality of the Faculty staff members actually did not matter. When asked about his nationality, Jan von Mikulicz-Radecki used to answer “I am a surgeon”. Thus among the faculty staff there were scientists of Jewish, German, Polish, and Czech origins.

The end of the Second World War was the end of the German University in Breslau. As soon as in August 1945 the University was revived, mainly by surviving scientific staff from John-Casimir University in Lviv. From the 26 chairs in the Faculty, as much as 21 were headed by professors from Lviv. Consequently, we consider ourselves as the heirs of medical faculties of both *Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Breslau* and *Uniwersytet Jana Kazimierza we Lwowie* and we are equally proud of them.

2. Wrocław Medical University – the present time

In 1950, medical and pharmacy faculties were extracted from the University to create Medical Academy which was renamed to Wrocław Medical University (WMU) in 2012. At present, the University comprise of 5 faculties:

- Faculty of Medicine (2267 students, 1st course: 21 candidates per place),
- Faculty of Dentistry (537 students, 1st course: 34 candidates per place),
- Faculty of Postgraduate Medical Training,
- Faculty of Pharmacy (1113 students, 1st course: 8 candidates per place),
- Faculty of Health Science (1655 students, 1st course: 5 candidates per place).

Commercial studying (with fee) is available on medical and dentistry faculties, both for studying in Polish and English languages. About 50 % of students of those two faculties are paying for their studies. Although, there is neither a separate faculty, nor separate departments dedicated for English speaking students, for didactic purposes they are grouped into an English Division headed by the Vice-Dean for Studies in English at Medicine and Dentistry Faculties, respectively. There are 720 foreigner students, 48 of whom are Ukrainian citizens. Of the foreigners, 100 are studying in Polish as holders of *Karta Polaka* (a document confirming Polish nationality of a foreigner). These figures do not include the foreign students participating in the ERASMUS+ Program.

The scientific staff of WMU comprise 120 professors (nominated by the President of Republic of Poland), 130 doctors habilitowany (a scientific grade higher than PhD), and 527 PhDs. Wrocław Medical University is ranked 5th of 11 medical universities and 15th among all institutions of higher education in Poland. In some important categories WMU is ranked even higher; we reach No. 7 in “scientific publications” and

“educational conditions”. The publishing house of WMU issues 4 scientific papers; “Advances in Clinical and Experimental Medicine” is a bimonthly journal published only in English, with IF of 1,095 and is indexed in MEDLINE.

The University keeps increasing its scientific and didactic capabilities. In addition to the old post-German campus a new University Hospital, with the capacity of about 1000 hospital beds, was erected 10 years ago. At present, there are nearly 120 000 hospitalizations and 20 000 surgical operations per year in it. In 2014, the first in the world successful neurosurgical reconstruction of an interrupted spinal cord was performed there. The Hospital is an important transplant center with more than 50 kidney transplantations per year. The Department of Anesthesiology and Intensive Therapy, with about 50 specialist and 50 residents is No. 1 in Poland. In the last 5 years, two other investments were brought to the successful end; a new headquarters for the Faculty of Pharmacy and the Center for Scientific Medical Information. The most recent venture is the Center for Medical Simulation focus on virtual teaching of medicine. The project is estimated to consume about 30 million PLN and is supposed to be finalized in 2020.

3. Wrocław Medical University – invitation for cooperation

Wrocław Medical University has working cooperation agreements with the following Ukrainian institutions of higher education: Zaporizhia State Medical University, Lviv National Medical University, Ternopil State Medical University, and Kharkov National University of Pharmacy. The cooperation with TSMU started in 2009 and is the most effective one. All the information about it are available on a website dedicated for the bilateral cooperation: <<http://www.umed.wroc.pl/tarnopol>>. The cornerstone for cooperation are exchange programs for TSMU researches and students. At present, the following programs are implemented:

- Working visits for TSMU professors. The visits lasting for 7–14 days are focused on understanding the scientific profiles and organization of the institutions relevant to the one headed by the visitor. Personal contacts cannot be overestimated for further cooperation and the visits usually result in research trainings for assistants.

- One-month trainings for young TSMU researches. A trainee undergoes a training in departments relevant to his/her scientific and professional interests, according to the application. The project is conducted with a financial support from DIL (the local medical board), and is thus limited to 6 applicants pre year.

- Group training for young researchers. The training may be organized at the request of TSMU authorities. In 2014 with an initiative of professor Олійник Олександр Валентинович over a dozen of surgeons and anesthesiologists underwent a two-weeks training in relevant institutions at Wrocław Medical University.

- Erasmus-like exchange program for TSMU students. Although Ukraine still does not participate in ERASMUS Program, two years ago WMU and TSMU started students' exchange program based on the rules of ERASMUS. According to these, TSMU nominates 4 students per year for studying in Wrocław and WMU does not charge students for the tuition. Two students are studying in English and two in Polish.

- Professional summer-holiday trainings for TSMU students. The training is organized for 10 medical students, 6 dentistry students, and 6 pharmacy students each year. The training for medical students lasts 4 weeks and for pharmacy and dentistry ones – 2 weeks. Medical training is the most intensive one; for the first two weeks the students visit the most modern and informative departments including transplant medicine, cardiology with cardiosurgery, neurosurgery, anesthesiology with intensive therapy, and nephrology with dialysis therapy; for the next two weeks they join the departments of their individual choice, according to their interests.

In addition, researchers and students of TSMU and WMU actively participate in scientific events organized by both partner institutions. Professors from TSMU held lectures on tuberculosis, children asthma, and sepsis, while the lecturers from WMU join conferences organized in Ternopil. Students from both universities present their research results at students' scientific conferences organized in Wrocław and Ternopil.

Future projects include:

- Joined research based on international programs offered by the Polish government i.e. POLONEZ Program,

- PhD study for TSMU employees,
- Publications of research results in journals issued by the cooperating Universities.

4. Conclusions

- Bilateral cooperation between WMU and TSMU is focused on building interpersonal relationships and exchange of experience.

- Both the Universities are strongly interested in future development of the cooperation.

- The efficiency of the program depends mainly on personal involvement of the universities authorities and individuals in the process of cooperation.

Отримано 07.04.16