

Farewell to the Great Internist

Professor Andrzej Szczeklik (1938–2012)

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Not many great physicians nowadays have enough vision to appreciate that “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts” and that “the human body isn’t like a cake cut into wedges”.¹ So-called modern physicians, focused on clinical test results and diseases of individual organs, often forget that they are dealing with a human being. While splitting medicine into pieces, they are missing what is most important – the patient.

Professor Andrzej Szczeklik kept reminding us about this fact throughout his life, be it in his medical textbooks or his philosophical writings on medicine. He was a clinician, a scientist, and a humanist. He showed that treating patient as “a whole” is by no means less modern and requires much more current knowledge and experience than focusing solely on one organ or system. He

also understood that medicine is not invincible and that we often must humbly acknowledge its limitations, which the modern world is so unwilling to accept.

Professor Szczeklik created the 2nd Department of Medicine of the Jagiellonian University Medical College in Cracow and made it one of the best centers of internal medicine in Poland and in Europe. He was the honorary member and president-elect of the Polish Society of Internal Medicine, and the head of the Scientific Board of the *Polish Archives of Internal Medicine* – its official journal. He was one of the most renowned modern Polish scientists and mentor of several generations of Polish physicians. It is impossible to list all his successes in this short obituary, just a few days after his passing. We will prepare a special issue of the *Polish Archives of Internal Medicine* to commemorate his work. Let us just say that Professor Andrzej Szczeklik was one of those who shaped the idea of modern internal medicine, which was summarized in a way in one of his last interviews: “An internist is like a symphony orchestra conductor; specialists are like individual instrumentalists. They do the playing, but only the conductor knows all the instruments and what to expect from them”.²

Polish internal medicine has lost an excellent conductor. We will not forget him or his timeless ideas.

Note The Polish version of the obituary is available online at www.pamw.pl.

REFERENCES

- 1 Academia. A White Piano. Interview with Professor Andrzej Szczeklik. 2011. <http://www.academia.pan.pl/dokonania.php?id=627&jezyk=en>. Accessed February 4, 2012.
- 2 Academia. [A White Piano. Interview with Professor Andrzej Szczeklik]. 2011; 42-45. Polish.