

IN MEMORIAM

Mirosław Kańtoch (1928–2007)

On the 5th of May, 2007, passed away professor dr hab. med. Mirosław Kańtoch, full member of the Polish Academy of Sciences, eminent microbiologist, the creator of modern Polish virology, expert of the WHO for medical microbiology, initiator and main executor of scientific programs in collaboration with the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, devoted to viral infections of social significance in Poland.

Mirosław Kańtoch was born on the 1st of January, 1928 in Sosnowiec. He studied at the Faculty of Medicine of the Medical Academy in Wrocław, where he received his medical doctor's degree in 1951. He was a student, and then assistant of professor Ludwik Hirszfild. He defended his doctoral thesis, the advisor of which was professor Henryk Makower, at the Medical Academy in Wrocław in 1956 and obtained the position of assistant professor at the same time at the Department of Medical Microbiology, Medical Academy and at the Institute of Immunology and Experimental Therapy of the Polish Academy of Sciences. In 1956 he organized the Electron Microscopy laboratory which he was then the head of for close to 10 years. In 1961, at the age of 33, he presented and defended his habilitation thesis and then left on a Rockefeller Foundation stipend for Baltimore, where he worked under the guidance of professor F.B. Bang. In his recollections professor Kańtoch always mentioned the names of professors L. Hirszfild, H. Makower and F.B. Bang as his mentors and the photos of those three professors always hung in his office.

Three years after returning from the USA, in 1965, professor M. Kańtoch was appointed by the Minister of Health as the head of the Department of Virology at the National Institute of Hygiene in Warsaw, which position he held until the year 2000.

In 1970 he became an associate professor and in 1978 full professor. In 1986 he was elected corresponding member of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN) and in 1994 full member of the PAN.

Prof. M. Kańtoch was a member of several Committees of the PAS, including the Committee of Micro-



biology, Committee of Immunology, Committee of Human Ecology Etiopathogenesis, Committee of Immunology and Human Disease Etiopathogenesis. He was honorary member of the Polish Society for Microbiology, the Society of Epidemiologists, I.I. Miecznikow Committee of Microbiologists and Infectious Disease Physicians in Russia, full member of the Warsaw Scientific Society, the Polish Society of Epidemiologists and Infectious Disease Physicians, member of the team of experts of the World Health Organization.

Prof. M. Kańtoch was on the Scientific Boards of many research institutions, such as the Ludwik Hirszfild Institute of Immunology and Experimental Therapy of the PAS, the National Institute of Hygiene, The Military Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology. Professor M. Kańtoch was also a member of the editorial boards of several scientific journals, e.g. "Przegląd Epidemiologiczny" "Postępy Mikrobiologii", "Medycyna Doświadczalna i Mikrobiologia", "Postępy Higieny i Medycyny Doświadczalnej", "Polish Journal of Microbiology" and a member of the international editorial board of "Acta Virologica".

Professor M. Kańtoch contributed in a major way to the development of scientific research on the

etiopathogenesis, immunology and immunoprophylaxis of viral infections. Worth particular attention is his contribution in studies on the safety, effectiveness and dissemination of vaccinations against the polio virus, measles and rubella and well as in the pioneer at the time research on the teratogenic action of the rubella virus and the occurrence of congenital defects caused by the infection of mothers during pregnancy with such viruses as the cytomegaly virus, *herpes simplex* (cold sores) and *varicella zoster* (chickenpox and shingles). In continuing the work of professor Feliks Przesmycki, professor M. Kańtoch became a co-originator of Polish medical virology.

The research mentioned above was documented in over 200 original scientific papers several score congress and meeting reports, which professor Kańtoch was the author or co-author of. The Professor was also the author of several monographs and the textbook

“Medical Virology” intended mainly for medical students and physicians, which had several reprints.

In recollecting professor M. Kańtoch, we cannot overlook his didactic achievements. We, the employees of the Department of Virology, National Institute of Hygiene, remember the Professor above all as a carer, doctoral thesis advisor and a person who inspired us and demanded we work on our habilitation theses. The professor was the thesis advisor of 20 doctorates, 17 of which were from the Department of Virology of the National Institute of Hygiene and three from the time of his work in Wrocław. We remember the Professor as a very demanding Person but always knew we could in every case count on his help, aid and protection.

*Employees of the Department of Virology
National Institute of Hygiene*