

In Memoriam: Stefania Jabłońska, 1920–2017

Professor Stefania Jabłońska, a remarkable doctor and globally respected dermatologist and researcher, passed away on May 8th, 2017.

Stefania Jabłońska was born Szela Ginzburg on September 7th, 1920. She started studying medicine at the University of Warsaw in 1937. After the German invasion of Poland in 1939, Jablonska moved to Ukraine to continue her studies at the University of Lviv. After the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, she had to flee to Kyrgyzstan, where she continued medical studies at the University of Frunze.

After graduating in 1942, she served in the Soviet Army. Her military service ended in the summer of 1943, when she was wounded in the Battle of Kursk. She spent a year at the dermatology department at the Soviet Academy of Sciences in Leningrad in 1945, where she graduated as a specialist in dermatology and venereology in 1946. That same year she began working as an assistant at the Dermatology Department of the Medical Academy in Warsaw.

In 1950 Professor Jabłońska returned to the Medical University of Warsaw after a year's training at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. In 1950 she defended with honors her doctoral dissertation *Cechy histologiczne odczynów skórnych na tuberkulinę i wyciągi z prątków gruźlicy* (Histological Features of Skin Reactions to Tuberculin and *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* Extracts). One year after defending her dissertation, she also defended her habilitation thesis with honors. After the death of Professor Marian Grzybowski—a renowned Polish dermatologist, clinic director, and head of the Department of Dermatology at the Warsaw School of Medicine— Professor Jabłońska was offered the leadership of the Department of Dermatology, where she remained until 1990. She launched the process to transform the clinic into a global leader. After retiring from the clinic in 1990 as a professor emeritus, she remained active in research until she was well into her 80s. In the early 1970s, Jablonska suggested a link between human papillomaviruses and skin cancer in epidermod-

ysplasia verruciformis.

Professor Jabłońska was best known for her pioneering research on the viral etiology of cervical cancer. Mention must also be made of Professor Jabłońska's achievements in understanding the mechanism of the influence of the human papillomavirus on the development of tumors. A team led by her was one of the first to observe that, when material taken from a wart is transferred to an unaffected part of the body, the development of warts is observed within a few dozen weeks. Jabłońska, who also spoke English, German, French, and Russian, opened channels of communication with the international medical research community, despite the fact that Poland was a communist country behind the Iron Curtain. In 1955 she published the first of her many papers in French and German dermatology journals. Two years later she published a paper in the *British Journal of Dermatology*, to be followed over the next half century by dozens more. She went on to author nearly one thousand articles.

Professor Stefania Jabłońska authored many academic textbooks, served as an advisor for 69 doctoral dissertations and 24 habilitation theses, was the instructor of 15 professors, and served as president of the Polish Dermatological Society (1962–1982, 1987–1995) and chair of the Department of Dermatology at the Medical University of Warsaw (1950–1990). Over the years, she became an honorary member of over 40 dermatological associations worldwide. She transcended boundaries in both science and culture. She pioneered the use of concepts from virology and immunology to tackle fundamental issues in skin pathology. Professor Jabłońska was a rigorous educator and a role model for all of us. She was an influential force on the international stage of dermatology. Her innate curiosity and appreciation for life will remain with those that were fortunate to be her friends. She will be remembered for her enthusiasm, open-mindedness, and loyalty to her friends and institutions. She remains one of the most distinguished and most frequently cited Polish scientists.

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