



Paweł Borowy¹

Conference report: *Theory and practice in former medicine. Opposition or cooperation?*, Wrocław, 14 December 2019

The fourth edition of a nationwide scientific conference on the history of medicine was held on the 14th of December 2019, in the building of the Historical Institute of the University of Wrocław. The organizers of the current edition decided to focus on the theme of "Theory and practice in former medicine. Opposition or cooperation?" These issues became a common point of discussions of the participants. In accordance with the tradition of the conferences, abstracts and a description of the topics were available to all participants in advance. This provided the opportunity to become familiar with the issues raised by the speakers, and thus facilitate more substantive discussion.

The conference was divided into 6 panels, which each contained 3 or 4 speeches. The selection criteria were both content of proposed issues, and chronology. The speakers only had 10 minutes for their presentations, but each panel ended with a discussion of about 60 minutes. Limiting the time of speeches in favor of extensive discussions, which was also attended by participants who did not deliver their own papers, reflects the main assumption of the meetings undertaken every year – exchange of thoughts and the search for new perspective on the analyzed problems. The common platform created in this way gives the possibility of constructive exchange of experience and facilitates solving problems arising at the interface of history and medicine, whose reliable presentation requires competence in both areas

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In the first part of the conference, participants had the opportunity to hear speeches by: dr hab., Prof. UJD Anna Odzywolska (Jan Długosz University of Humanities and Natural Sciences in Częstochowa), dr Edyta Rudolf (Medical University of Wrocław), and Aleksandra Popiołek-Walicka, MA (University of Wrocław). The presentations concerned the cooperation of medical theory and practice on the example of Johannes Crato, as well as Johannes Baptista Montanus and his student Walenty Sierpinski. They were complemented by reflections on the ingredients of drugs from mythical creatures.

In the second panel the results of their research were presented by Karolina Szula (University of Wrocław) and Izabela Janicka (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań). Participants' lectures focused on old medical tools and a comparison of medical ethics between medieval Europe and Arabic countries.

In the third session three researchers presented their lectures: dr Jarosław Szymański (University of Wrocław), dr Katarzyna Pękacka-Falkowska (Poznań University of Medical Sciences), and Julia Pomian (University of Wrocław). The speeches focused on various medical and non-medical aspects of the disease presented in memoirs, the problem of *postmortem* examination and the issue of so-called *plica polonica*.

The following panel consisted of two presentations: one by dr Jakub Węglorz (University of Wrocław) and second by mgr Paula Wydziałkowska (Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń). Both researchers focused on medical aspects in memorative literature: showing the occurrence of descriptions of healing practice as well as the legal and day-to-day relationship between theory and practice in former healing.

The fifth part of the conference concerned issues related to the history of nineteenth century infectious diseases (in terms of both medical casuistry and ethnography), as well as the social background of pharmaceutical practice in the early twentieth century. Participants could hear the presentation: prof. dr hab. Bożena Płonki-Syroka (Wrocław Medical University), mgr Marcelina Jakimowicz (Wrocław Medical University) and dr Wojciech Ślusarczyk (Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń).

The last section focused on methodological issues, both in terms of how to transfer knowledge and the ability to identify discoveries in frequently observed phenomena (research on eutectic liquids). These topics were raised by dr Maciej Włodarczyk (Medical University of Wrocław) and dr Danuta Raj (Medical University of Wrocław).

The conference was complemented by a lively discussion on issues raised in individual speeches, which abounded in many valuable comments on the presented subjects. They significantly facilitated the speak-

ers and listeners to navigate the interdisciplinary field of science. The conference ended with a general consensus on the sense of organizing further interdisciplinary meetings on the history of medicine. An important factor affecting the quality of the proceedings was the representation of researchers both from the range of humanities as well as medical sciences, which gave the conference an interdisciplinary character. In addition to speakers, also researchers in the history of healthcare from leading university centers in Poland took part in the conference as moderators and discussors. Worth mentioning is also the active presence of a large group of history students interested in the issues raised.