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Zygmunt Kramsztyk, MD and his idea of innovative hospitals

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Abstract

Background

Problem of education of Jewish doctors in Poland under Russian occupation of the 19th c.

Objective

Presentation of doctor Zygmunt Kramsztyk (1849-1920) a Jewish ophthalmologist – who created an innovative system of hospitals based on the most modern trends in Europe and tried to introduce it in Warsaw between 1894-1902.

Methods

The article is based on information found in medical journals published in the 19th and 20th c, articles written by Z. Kramsztyk, the book of archives, inventory of the Jewish hospital of Warsaw and the history of Jews and their education in Poland.

Results

Zygmunt Kramsztyk tried to introduce advances in the European system of hospital building, their man-

agement and overall in the medical sciences of those days, especially in bacteriology, however, was unable to implement his ideas due to political restrictions of the Russian occupants. He tried to provide access to health care for all social classes. Apart from treating patients he propagated sanitary education of the public. In his own journal “Criticism in Medicine” [“Krytyka Lekarska”] he presented articles on legal and ethical aspects of medicine, methodology of writing scientific papers, the use of new medical equipment, doctor-patient relationship, philosophy of medicine and precision in medical terminology.

Conclusion

His ideas were not fully implemented because of the political situation, however were appreciated later when liberated Poland tried to introduce a new health care system in 1928.

INTRODUCTION

In 19th century, Poland did not exist as a country as it was partitioned and occupied by: Austria, Prussia and Russia. The situation of Jewish communities depended on legislation and internal politics of the occupants [1]. Most educated Polish people started to struggle for independence [2]. A narrow group of educated Jews started to send their children to Polish schools and teach them Polish [2]. That way these children received good education and became doctors, lawyers, bankers or factory owners. Co-existence between Jews and Poles became closer and they joined in the struggle to create a modern democratic society with equal rights and religious freedoms [2]. Zygmunt Kramsztyk's family played an important role in this process. In spite of political repressions under Russian occupation in the Polish Kingdom, Zygmunt Kramsztyk managed to change the hospital system and improve treatment methods. He was interested in new discoveries within the medical sciences, especially in bacteriology, and tried to introduce them in part of Poland occupied by Russia. That way he contributed to the development of Polish medicine.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

Zygmunt Kramsztyk (Fig.1) was born as the son of a rabbi, Izaak Kramsztyk . His great grandfather Izaak lived near Warsaw and worked in trade. He and most of his family was killed by the Russian army during Kościuszko Uprising on 4th Nov. 1794, [3,4]. Only his son Samuel survived this massacre and moved to Warsaw, occupied by Prussia since 1795 [2]. "Prussian Regulations for Jews" ["Regulamin Żydowski"] demanded that Jews have surnames and Samuel received a German name Kramstück, which was later changed into Polish Kramsztyk [2]. Prussian legislation with slight changes was also used under Russian occupation of the Polish Kingdom, which lasted from 1815 till 1918 [3]. The right to vote depended on the knowledge of Polish.

In the second half of the 18th century a part of the Jewish community wanted to change traditional Jewish Orthodox values [2]. In Poland, a Jewish doctor of King Stanisław Poniatowski, Jakub Kalmanson (1722-1811), postulated learning Polish, saying prayers in Polish and changing traditional Jewish clothes [2,3]. This trend towards closer contact with the Polish culture was supported by very few factory owners, intellectuals and rabbis. Co-operation between Poles and Jews was stronger after the death of Tsar Alexander I in 1825, who was the Emperor of Russia and the King of the Polish Kingdom. Since then Jewish people became persecuted in the Russian Empire. Many of them started to



Figure 1. Zygmunt Kramsztyk (1848-1920)

move to the Polish Kingdom. There Jew's legal problems were represented by the Committee of Orthodox Jews (1825-1837) [Komitet Starozakonny], which founded a School for Rabbis (1826-1862) [13]. The goal of the School was to educate future teachers in accordance with changes proposed by J. Kalmanson. In the first year there were only 26 students and in 1846 as many as 260. Although his father did not accept this choice, Izaak Kramsztyk (1814?-1889) – the father of Zygmunt – enrolled at this School in 1832. After graduating in 1836, he was employed in this School as a teacher [2,4].

Intellectual leaders and propagators of friendships between Poles and Jews were Polish political emigrants and poets: Joachim Lelewel, Adam Mickiewicz and Cyprian Norwid [2]. The idea of friendship became stronger during the struggle for freedom in 1831, in 1848 and 1864. Izaak Kramsztyk took part in this national struggle because he believed that liberation of Poland was a guarantee of civil rights and religious freedoms for both nations. He passed down his ideas to his sons [2].

Izaak Kramsztyk, who became a rabbi, started working in a synagogue in Warsaw in 1852 and on 6th June he gave the first sermon in Polish. He took part in patriotic demonstrations in 1860 and participated in writing a petition resulting in reforms, which guaranteed equal rights to Jews inhabiting of the Polish Kingdom. Since then young Jews were allowed to start education in Polish schools and universities such as the Academy of Medicine and Surgery (1857-1962) and the Warsaw Polish Central School (1862-1869) [4,5]. The latter presented very good quality of teaching and, in spite of restriction enforced by the Russian occupants, became a scientific center. What is more, people educated in this school were willing to work for the public benefit. In the sixties, Izaak Kramsztyk was arrested twice for his political activity and sent into exile to Russia. When he returned in 1867, he was not able to teach as a rabbi because the School for Rabbi was closed down by the Russians [6]. Izaak and his wife Ewa neé Fryling had 5 sons. All of them had Polish names. The family was not rich but all their sons attended Polish schools and graduated from Warsaw Polish Central School (which since 1870 was transformed into the Warsaw University). Two sons became doctors, one became a lawyer and one a physicist [7].

ZYGMUNT KRAMSZTYK – EDUCATION

Zygmunt Kramsztyk was born in 1849. In 1867 he became a student of the Medical Department at the Warsaw Polish Central School, which after 1870 changed its name to Tsar Warsaw University [Carski Uniwersytet Warszawski. After the fall of the January Uprising in 1864, political repressions at Warsaw University increased. To express their resistance, Polish doctors and university teachers started to edit two journals in Polish: “Doctor’s News” [“Gazeta Lekarska”] and “Klinika”. In 1970, Z. Kramsztyk published an article on neurology “The effect of posterior roots of spinal cord on the response of anterior roots” [“O wpływie korzeni tylnych rdzenia kręgowego na pobudliwość przednich”] with the help of his tutor Feliks Nawrocki, professor of physiology and philosophy of medicine [2].

Z. Kramsztyk graduated in 1872 and obtained a Diploma in Medicine with a license to practice in the whole country except in the position of army doctor, inspector and professor. The Russians suppressed the development of science by eliminating Polish and Jewish scientists and limiting money for Universities, which in turn resulted in the decrease in the quality of education. In 1873, Z. Kramsztyk was employed as an assistant doctor (unpaid position) in University Ophthalmic Clinic under a Polish doctor Zdzisław Genela [8,9]. Z. Kramsztyk was awarded a doctor’s degree in

1879 after writing a theses titled “Changes observed in the eyes in leukaemia patients” [“O zmianach postrzęganych w oczach przy białaczce”] [2]. For political reasons he was not allowed to continue his career at the University Ophthalmic Clinic and received a post of the head of Ophthalmic Ward at the Jewish Hospital in Warsaw [10]. When Z. Kramsztyk began his work there the head of the Jewish Community was Ludwik Natanson, a well-known doctor, a member of Doctor’s Association in Warsaw [Warszawskie Towarzystwo Lekarskie], and the founder and editor of Polish medical journal “Doctor’s Weekly” [“Tygodnik Lekarski”] who obtained this position in 1871 [4]. He transformed a Supervision of Synagogue [Dozór Bożniczy] into modern and well-functioning Jewish Community Board [Zarząd Gminy] and started many financial and administrative reforms [5].

THE NEW ROLE OF HOSPITALS

First hospitals in Europe were based on the principle of charity, prayer and help to the needy, which was common to both Jewish and Christian religion [2]. Therefore, apart from giving treatment, they also played a role of a shelter for the homeless, old, infirm and disabled who needed care and means for a living [11,12].

The first information about the Jewish hospital in Warsaw comes from 1799 [13]. A new hospital building was erected in 1835 according to required standards of those days. It was designed as a main rectangular building with 2 attached side buildings. Because of the belief that air was the cause of diseases and hospital infections were common until the first half of the 19th century, care was taken of good ventilation of buildings and isolation of patients [11]. There were 12 hospital beds per room. Thanks to private donations it was possible to open supportive services such as chemists’, synagogue and kitchen. For the first time in the history of Polish hospitals the position of a resident doctor was appointed. It is nowadays a counterpart of a doctor on duty [13]. The resident doctor lived in a flat within the hospital and his duty was to see hospital patients whenever necessary. The hospital was divided into five wards: medical, surgical, ophthalmic, psychiatric and skin and venereal diseases. Ophthalmic ward was opened in 1861 and it was the second in Warsaw. About 1870 the hospital was equipped with bathrooms with baths, hospital laundry and laboratory. When Z. Kramsztyk began to work in this hospital it was overcrowded and the problem escalated due to increasing number of refugees from the Russian Empire [4]. Hospital fever and infections developed and it was difficult to accommo-



Figure 2. Administrative building with a synagogue

date all the patients [11,12]. Russian authorities refused to build an additional floor over the existing building. The Hospital Board along with the hospitals' head doctor decided that building a new hospital is a necessity [13].

Z. Kramsztyk tried to attract donators to raise the money for a new hospital. He was giving public lectures and published articles in local papers [14,15,16,17,18]. The idea was supported by citizens of Warsaw. In 1886 the idea was supported by the Jewish Community Board and its chairman Dr Natanson. With the support of the Jewish community Dr Kramsztyk started efforts to obtain permission from the Russian government to collect money for building a hospital. Part of the money was donated by the Jewish Community Board but a large amount of it came from private donations of the people from all classes of the society – the rich and the poor – and not from the town council or government [13]. In 1887 a Hospital Building Committee was established. It was divided into several sections: general, technical, financial, medical and legal [13]. Each of them was responsible for a separate task. The Committee looked for a suitable building site and planned new equipment. Dr Kramsztyk and Dr Natanson decided to visit the most modern hospitals in Europe to find the best model for their new hospital so they went to Germany, Austria and France to see the new trends in hospital building and management [13]. After their journey Dr Kramsztyk prepared his innovative project for a modern hospital and presented it to the Hospital Building Committee. In his opinion a modern hospital should meet the following standards [14]:

1. Smaller rooms for several patients, heated, well ventilated and full of light with large windows.
2. Good sanitary conditions in the rooms to prevent spread of infections, basic furniture and floors easy to clean, care for personal hygiene of patients.
3. Good care of the patients: qualified doctors working in such a system that they are not over-worked.
4. A position of a resident doctor on duty who must see a patient whenever necessary (the idea continued from the previous Jewish hospital)
5. Proper salaries for doctors.
6. Modern hospital equipment to perform medical procedures based on contemporary achievements in medical science.

Laboratories for testing biological material from patients – the use of recent achievements in bacteriology. Suitable psychological conditions for convalescence of patients – a hospital surrounded by a park with trees and flowers.

7. Laboratories for testing biological material from patients – the use of recent achievements in bacteriology.

8. Suitable psychological conditions for convalescence of patients – a hospital surrounded by a park with trees and flowers.

It should be mentioned that in the second part of the 19thc scientific discoveries made by Joseph Lister (1827-1895), Louis Pasteur (1822-1895) and Robert Koch (1843-1910) initiated a rapid development of bacteriology in Western Europe and many disease causing

organisms (bacteria) were identified [15]. In planning a new model of a hospital Dr Kramsztyk aimed at effective treatment and the fight against hospital infections so the system of separate buildings with different functions was considered to be the best solution. Apart from creating proper conditions for effective treatment Dr Kramsztyk had in mind the religious idea of mercy – that a hospital should fulfill important public function and give charitable help to the poorest members of society i.e. helpless elderly people.

The construction of a new hospital designed according to Dr Kramsztyk's idea started in 1894 on a building plot bought on the outskirts of Warsaw [13]. The plot covered the area of 67.000 m². It was surrounded by a fence [13]. There were 17 buildings (usually one or two story with a basement) made of brick, plastered, covered with roofing of metal sheets. They had a sewage system and electric lighting. Buildings destined for treatment were situated at a distance from the street to provide peace and quiet for the patients, who could recover in the park among trees and flowers [13].

The hospital was composed of the following wards: surgical, ophthalmologic, gynecological with maternity unit, lung diseases, ear and throat, infectious diseases, internal and neurological diseases, skin and venereal diseases, psychiatric diseases and a building for medical research with a laboratory to examine biological material from patients [11]. (Fig 2) There were 195 rooms for patients containing 2,4 or 6 beds. The hospital housed 535 beds: 252 for males, 270 for females and 13 for children. The hospital had well equipped operating theatres, research rooms and consulting rooms for doctors, which were absent in old, traditional hospitals. A separate building was devoted for hospital administrative offices and a synagogue, with a ground floor containing a reception with admissions, out-patients and a consulting room for the head doctor. There was also a funeral home with special (cool) place to keep corpses, dissection room, a chapel for Christian patients and a flat for a caretaker [13]. (Fig.3,4,5)

In 1901, the first Polish hospital based on a new system of aseptic regulations was opened in Warsaw, it was called Infant Jesus Hospital [Szpital Dzieciątka Jezus]. In the same year Dr Kramsztyk assumed the position of a head doctor of the Jewish hospital and supervised the last stages of its building [19]. The official opening of the new Jewish Hospital was in June 1902 and Dr Kramsztyk gave the opening speech. In the same year the medical journal "Progress in Ophthalmology" ["Postęp Okulistyczny"] published information that Dr Kramsztyk was relieved of his post on his own demand and became a head doctor in the Ophthalmic Ward in

the same hospital [13]. In 1904 he retreated from hospital work and continued his private practice giving free medical help to the poor [2].

In the part of Poland under Russian occupation, Russian legislation was strictly enforced. Hospitals were subjected to the City Council for Public Charity [Miejska Rada Dobroczyńności Publicznej] [2]. The Council ran a wasteful financial policy and because of that the condition of many hospitals started to deteriorate. Dr Kramsztyk and other doctors felt alarmed. Articles criticizing hospital policy of the occupant started to appear in medical journals. One of the opponents was Dr Kramsztyk who founded a medical journal "Criticism in Medicine" in 1897 and published his articles proposing a reform of the hospital system [1]. He discussed the function of the head doctor, the way of accepting and appointing new consultants and their duties, changes in the system of hiring new doctors and analysed the disagreement over their salary. Russian authorities did not approve of this criticism. Dr Kramsztyk claimed that the head doctor in a hospital should be fully responsible for the work of the whole hospital. The effect of treatment depended strictly on effective management of hospital work and finances. In August 1907 Warsaw hospitals became officially submitted to the management of the City Council, which deepened the chaos in hospitals.

PUBLIC ACTIVITY AND RESEARCH WORK OF DR KRAMSZTYK

Apart from the articles on the new system of hospitals, Z. Kramsztyk wrote many articles on theory and philosophy of medicine. He was interested in ethical problems, for example methods of carrying out medical experiments. In his papers he brought up various subjects including the methodology and style of writing research articles, doctor-patient relationship, accessibility to free healthcare service, problems connected with organization and management of hospitals. He stressed the need for caution in expressing ideas and avoiding radical opinions in science. His published papers were issued in 1899 in the compilation "Critical drafts in the field of medicine" ["Szkice Krytyczne z zakresu medycyny"] [20]. Due to his philosophical contributions, he is included in the Polish School of Philosophy of Medicine [21].

The death of Dr Natanson in 1896 brought end of hope for assimilation of the Jewish community with the Polish society. At the turn of the 19th and 20thc Russian anti-Semitic (anti-Jewish) trends increased and the same unfriendly nationalistic attitude was observed among many Poles, due to the activity of Roman

Figure 3. A plan of the area
 1. Ophthalmic and gynecological building
 2. Skin and Venereal diseases building
 3. Pulmonary and Throat diseases building
 4. Infectious diseases buildings
 5. Internal Diseases building
 6. Mental diseases building
 7. Funeral home
 8. Maternity building with laboratory
 9. Kitchen, laundry building, chamber for mechanical equipment and boiler house
 10. - 13 coach house, stable, disinfection chamber and utility room
 11. 14. Food store and icehouse
 12. 15. Staff housing building and with nursery and convalescence shelter
 13. 16. Icehouses

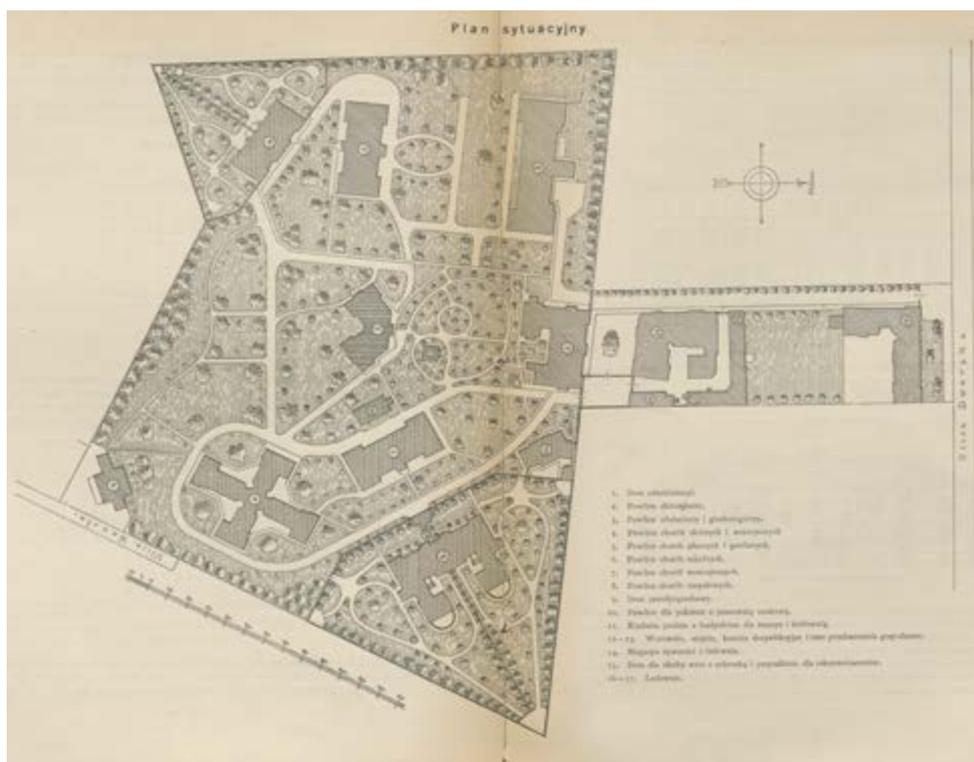


Figure 4. The interior of the synagogue

Dmowski and Zygmunt Balicki, who were the leaders of National Democracy organization [Narodowa Demokracja]. The number of their supporters rapidly increased among educated people in Warsaw, including doctors. As a result many limitations for Jews were introduced for example doctors of Jewish origin were not accepted as new members of Warsaw Doctors Association. Bitterly disappointed, Dr Kramsztyk resigned from the membership in the Association in 1905 and

in 1907 he closed down his journal “Criticism in Medicine” [2].

After 1905 his activity concentrated on public health education and improving health care [2]. He published scientific articles for the general public on problems connected with biology and hygiene [2]. In 1905 Dr Kramsztyk was engaged in the work of the Society for Public Medicine [Towarzystwo Medycyny Społecznej] hoping to fulfill his ideas [2]. In 1907 he

founded a Friends of Nature Society where he tried to teach young people about nature and popularize healthy lifestyle and spending free time outdoors. He also popularized the idea of building “towns-in-the-garden” as opposed to overcrowded and chaotic industrial towns, which created favorable conditions for the development of infectious diseases [2].

In 1907, Kramsztyk wrote a two-volume handbook entitled “Clinical Symptoms of Eye Diseases” [“Objawy Kliniczne Chorób Oczu”] [2]. He described many diseases based on observations and statistics of eye diseases: conjunctivitis, stye, trachoma, glaucoma, cataract, iritis, scleritis, gonorrheal inflammation of eyeball, syphilitic changes in the eye, and retina detachment. According to him trachoma should be treated through resting in fresh air, and isolation of patients in small scattered buildings. Z. Kramsztyk appreciated the role of histopathological examination in making a diagnosis and stressed the importance of analyzing patients’ medical history and listening to their description of symptoms. He proposed treatment of eye diseases in infants and children, increasing the number of ophthalmic out-patients and opening shelters for the blind. He suggested teaching surgical procedures to country doctors. In his opinion the main aim of ophthalmology should be fighting blindness and prophylaxis of eye diseases by improvement of working conditions. Dr Kramsztyk was the author of over 60 medical articles on medicine, methodology of writing, philosophy of medicine, ethics and nature [18, 33].

Z. Kramsztyk was a broad – minded doctor whose intelligence and interests exceeded his contemporaries. He created an innovative model of a hospital. A lot of his ideas were implemented after his death in the reforms occurring after 1928. The main aim of his medical work was patients’ benefit. He attempted to provide medical care to the poorest classes of society, tried to make use of recent advances in bacteriology, fought for a democratic society with equal rights for Jews and Poles. He died in 1920 and is buried on the Jewish cemetery in Warsaw.

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