

130 years of the Department of Dermatology and Venereology of the Military Medical Academy

A. V. Samtsov

The *Department of Dermatology and Venereology* of the Military Medical Academy in Sankt Peterburg, Russia was founded on November 15, 1869 by the decision at the Conference of the Medico-Surgical Academy (now Military Medical Academy, MMA). It is the first and oldest Department of Dermatology and Venereology in Russia.

At the session of the Academy Conference on November 22, 1869 F.V. Podkopaev was elected Professor and Head of the Department of Dermatology, while V.M. Tarnovskij was elected Professor and Head of the Department of Syphilidology and Venereal Diseases. F.V. Podkopaev headed the department for less than one year, after his death in 1870 A.G. Polotebnev succeeded him as chairman. A.G. Polotebnev (1838-1907) who enjoys the reputation of establishing the *Russian dermatological school*, was a follower of the famous clinician and therapist I.P. Botkin. He obtained an excellent education in Vienna and Paris. According to him *two main principles* should be observed in all the investigative activities in dermatology: 1. the studies of disorders of the skin should be correlated with the condition of the entire body, paying special attention to the nervous system as well as to the environment; 2. due consideration has to be given to histopathology and pathophysiology, in view of the fact that appropriate functioning of the skin is of vital importance for the normal functioning of the entire body.

Professor V. M. Tarnovskij (1837-1906) is an important personality within the history of Russian dermatology and venereology. Initially he was Head of the Department of Syphilidology and Venereology but since 1894 he directed the joined Department of Dermatology and Venereology of the MMA. His merit was the founding of the *Russian Society of Syphilidology and Dermatology* in Sankt Peterburg in 1885, which seems to be the first such society in Europe; this society is still active and was named after him.

From 1897 to 1924 the department was headed by professor T.P. Pavlov (1870-1932). Under his direction the problems involving the neurogenic aspects in the pathogenesis of eczema, prurigo and in different forms of alopecia were intensively studied. Histopathology of syphilis was also of great concern to him. Professor P.A. Velikanov (1876-1929) who was in charge of the Department only during one year enjoys the reputation of having introduced the x-ray treatment of skin disorders. Professor M.G. Mgebrov headed the Department from 1929 to 1940. During his time numerous investigations were going on concerning primarily the pathogenesis and treatment of pyoderma, the metabolism of the skin as well as the role of metabolic disorders inducing various skin diseases.

In 1940, professor S.T. Pavlov became Head and remained in charge up to 1968. During this period a pleiad

of gifted dermatologists were trained who subsequently headed many departments of dermatology throughout Soviet Union. New methods were introduced to study pathogenesis and treatment of eczema. During World War II efforts were concentrated on handling infections and parasitic diseases. Later on among other problems, etiology and pathogenesis of seborrhea and bullous skin diseases, the role of biochemistry in the pathogenesis of skin disorders as well as exposure to ionizing radiation were investigated; a special interest was dedicated also to combustions and treatment of syphilis.

Professor O.K. Shaposhnikov (1920-1990) headed the department from 1968 to 1987. The main efforts in scientific activities during that period were devoted to allergic vasculitis, immunology of lupus erythematosus, clinical and histopathological aspects of skin lymphomas, the study of papulopustular lesions of the face and on new trends in mycological skin disorders. In 1987 professor A.N. Rodionov became head of the Department. At that period the research was concentrated on cytophotometry and electron microscopy of skin lymphomas, on Wegener's granulomatosis, urticarial vasculitis, systemic connective tissue disorders and connective tissue involvement in rubromycosis.

At present the Chairman of the Department is professor A.V. Samtsov; he is assisted by another professor, three senior lecturers and six assistant-doctors who are tutoring 6th- and 7th-term medical students, 15 to 20 residents in dermatology and organizing the praxis-oriented educational courses for general physicians. The residency in dermatology comprises a three-year training, while courses for general physicians are lasting 2 to 3 months. Research currently going on is concerned with, morphological and functional characteristics of phagocytizing mononuclear cells in sarcoidosis and sarcoid-reactions of the skin, cutaneous manifestations of Lyme borreliosis, immunologic and endocrine aspects of Kaposi's sarcoma. Special attention is being paid also to problems concerning trichology, skin lymphomas, psoriasis, psoriatic arthritis, syphilis and neurosyphilis as well as to telemedicine. Preparations are in course for introduction of a postgraduate teaching in histopathology of the skin. During the last years more than 130 scientific papers were published as well as 40 contributions at various scientific meetings in Russia, Europe and USA.



Professor A.G. Polotebnev (1838-1907) chairman of the Department of Dermatology during the years 1870-94, initiator of the Russian dermatological school.

Professor V.M. Tarnovskij (1837-1906) since 1894 chairman of the joint Department of Dermatology and Venereology, founder of the Russian Society of Syphilidology and Dermatology.



A U T H O R ' S A D D R E S S *Aleksej V. Samtsov MD, PhD, professor and chairman Department of Dermatology and Venereology, Military Medical Academy, P.O. Box 349, 196135 Sankt Peterburg, Russia*