

Professor Józef Waclaw Grott and his methods of pancreas palpation

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Abstract: Professor Józef Waclaw Grott (1894–1973), an outstanding Polish internist developed three methods of pancreas palpation (1935, 1947, 1948) that were of much diagnostic value in the twentieth century.

Key words: biography, history of medicine, pancreas diagnostics

Józef Waclaw Grott was born on the 5th of February 1894 in a village called Wielka Woda, in Polish lower middle-class family. He graduated from Wojciech Górski Grammar-School in Warsaw in 1912 [1] and passed Russian maturity exam in Moscow in 1913. At the same year he begun medical studies at the Jagiellonian University and carried them on in Russian Kazan in the following years 1914–1918. He returned to Poland in 1918, where since 1921 he served voluntary duty in Polish Armed Forces; he took part in Polish – Bolshevik war in the capacity of second lieutenant – second doctor. After the end of warfare he completed medical studies in Cracow (1922).

Between 1922 and 1940 he worked at the Warsaw University Internal Diseases Clinic (located in the Saint Spirit Hospital) under the guidance of outstanding Polish internists and professors: Kazimierz Rzętkowski, Jerzy Modrakowski, Witold Orłowski, Edward Żebrowski, Antoni Gluziński and Zdzisław Gorecki [2]. In 1939 during September campaign he fulfilled doctors duties in the Headquarters of Nowogrodzka Calvary Brigade, under command of general Władysław Anders. During Nazi occupation he participated in secret teaching of Warsaw University Medical Faculty students. He was arrested by gestapo in 1943 and jailed for few weeks in Pawiak prison. He also took part in Warsaw uprising in 1944 and moved to Częstochowa after its fall. Up to December 1945 he directed the Internal Diseases Department of Mary the Holy Virgin Town Hospital in Częstochowa. He received the right to conduct lectures at the Warsaw University in 1945, based on a postdoctoral dissertation written before the Second World War “A present state of most important issues from pancreas clinic”. Soon after that he begun work at the Medical Faculty

at University of Łódź (later Medical Academy) and received the title of associate professor (he received the title of full professor in 1959). He directed the First Internal Diseases Clinic between 1947–1964 and additionally fulfilled the duties of the head of Second Internal Diseases Clinic of the Military Medical Academy between 1958–1962.

Before the Second World War he expanded his knowledge in the field of internal medicine in a few facilities abroad, such as in London at Professor's H. MacLean Clinic at Saint Thomas Hospital (1928), at Professor J. Parkinson in Heart Diseases Hospital (1928 and 1939) and at professor E. Gye in the Imperial Cancer Research Foundation (1939). In Paris he visited clinics and hospitals that conducted research in metabolic disease and endocrine disease [3].

Professor J.W. Grott's basic area of research was pancreas and its diseases. He dedicated most of his papers to its diagnosis and therapy. His major achievement was the development of three methods of pancreas palpation that “gave the possibility of detecting pancreas diseases with a common method that was easily available for every physician” [4]. He published the first of the above mentioned methods in 1935. The author emphasized the novelty and advantages of the method:

- 1) special supine position with legs drawn in and patient' fist put under the lumbar section of spine
- 2) the composition of doctors hands along left board of straight muscle that prevented the muscle from stretching tight during the pressure made by doctor's left hand inside the abdominal cavity; the ambling moves from the outer line to the centre of the abdomen moved the stomach and the intestines form the pancreas field that was confirmed wit control radiological picture. Following the instruction allow to examine the tail and body of the pancreas one after the other at the left side and the head of the pancreas at the right side [5].

J.W. Grott described the painfulness symptom of the body of the the pancreas, that was ascertained with the above mentioned palpation method [6], and the symptom of skin trophic changes on the abdomen that occurs during chronic inflam-

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Received: May 7, 2007. Accepted in final form: May 9, 2007.

Conflict of interest: none declared.

Pol Arch Med Wewn. 2007; 117 (3): 117-118

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mation of the organ. He examined trophic changes of the skin by comparing the thickness of the panniculus adiposus at the left and right side; in case of positive symptom the skin in the pancreas throw could be easier pulled back from the base [7].

J.W. Grott announced another method of pancreas palpation in 1947 – the method in standing and reclining positions [8]. The assumption of that method was to find the conditions to release the tension in front abdominal wall in order to penetrate the abdominal cavity with right hand, up to contact with the pancreas. In order to achieve this a physician stood at the right side of the patient; he embraced patients' left side at the level of exterior pancreas throw (pancreas belt) with left hand, and he put his right hand at the surface of the stomach at the level of the left hand. Both hands pulps of the fingers touched together. Similar to the method from 1935, the examination was supposed to be performed with ambling moves from the outer to the inner part of the pancreas belt, that moved the stomach and the intestines from the field of examination. It was possible to exert pain, in case of chronic inflammation and felt the enlargement of the sick organ by pressing it with the fingers of right hand.

J.W. Grott published the description of pancreas palpation in the right-sided and left-sided position in 1948 [9]. A patient laid in both positions with legs bent in knees; a physician stood in front of the patient and examined his stomach with right hand and he put his left hand at the back on the ribs, at the level of right hand. The examination in the upper part of the mesogastrium and in epigastrium was performed in order to indicate tenderness or enlargement of the organ. This particular method was recommended by J.W. Grott especially for practicing physicians. The position of the patient itself caused the reduction of tension in abdominal integument (straight muscle) as well as automatic displacement of the stomach and the intestines from the field of examination [10].

Professor J.W. Grott in the period of 30 years of his clinical and scientific activity verified usefulness of his diagnostic approach to the pancreas diseases. According to the researcher, the best achievements were obtained during pancreas palpation in a patient in supine position. The significance of that method was documented in a number of publications written by clinicians from Łódź [11].

The scientific output of Professor J.W. Grott represents 262 publications including 77 papers in foreign languages. He was most interested in the pancreas disease – diabetes. He propagated the treatment that was based on low carbohydrate diet and calories fitted for an individual patient. He supplemented the pancreas diseases diagnostics with lipase test announced in 1953. He also developed a method of blood coagulability with glucose burden examination that was used to diagnose haemorrhagic diathesis, diabetes and hepatopathy. He dedicated much attention to parasitic diseases. He was one of the first scientists that noticed the association between cholangiocarcinoma, pancreas inflammation and presence of *Lambia intestinalis* parasite in the digestive tract of patients. He developed several intestinal parasite treatment modalities.

Fig. Józef Wacław Grott (1894–1973) (reproduced from: A. Kuratowski. *Profesorowie i docenci wydziałów medycznych Uniwersytetu Medycznego w Łodzi 1945–1964*. Wyd. UM, Łódź, 2003: 74)



For example, he was the first to use akranil in taeniarhynchus and gentian violet as well as blackberry against oxyuriasis. He organized the Outpatient Clinic and Department of Parasitology at Barlicki Clinical Hospital at the beginning of the 50.ies of the last century. He also introduced the obligation of coproscopic examination for patients and personnel in Scientific – Research Facility in Busko-Zdrój.

Professor J.W. Grott was a member of many scientific societies, editorial committees of numerous medical magazines and active participant in many conferences, congresses and assemblies in Poland and abroad [12].

He died on the 27th of September 1973 in Łódź.

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