

Julian Talko-Hryniewicz – physician, anthropologist and Siberia explorer

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Abstract: Julian Talko-Hryniewicz was born in a Polish family of noble descent in Lithuania in 1850. He graduated from University in Kiev with diploma in medicine in 1876. He begun his practice in Zwinogródka in Ukraine. He left to Siberia in 1891 where he got the job of regional physician in the town Troickosowsk. He got back to Poland to run the Department of Anthropology at the Jagiellonian University in 1809. During the First World War he organised the Buriacki Field Hospital (1915–1917) in Petersburg. In the independent Poland he got back to the Jagiellonian University where he published many medical and anthropological publications. He died in Cracow in 1936.

Key words: anthropology, history of medicine, medicine, physician in Siberia

Publications about Julian Talko-Hryniewicz emphasize first of all his achievements in anthropology he was dabbling in when he was free from his professional duties as a physician, and they pass over the essential phases of his life, dedicated to medical assistance for the sick [1].

In the case of Julian Talko-Hryniewicz becoming a physician had its origin in his family environment: his maternal grandfather – Adam Fischer – was a famous physician in Kaunas, and his father Dominik and his paternal uncle both studied medicine in Vilnius. Also his mother's brother and his stepbrother became physicians [2].

Julian Talko-Hryniewicz was born on August 12, 1850 in Rukszany in Lithuania into the Polish family of Dominik and Leokadia née Fischer. Due to the fact that the marriage of his parents broke up soon, his mother's parents took care of him and brought him up. Adam Fischer, whom Talko-Hryniewicz in his adult life respected as an unattainable ideal of a man and a physician, became a source of the first intellectual inspirations and medical interests of young Julian. Talko-Hryniewicz started his secondary education in Kaunas and finished it in Petersburg. After unsuccessful efforts to continue his education in Warsaw and Petersburg, he finally decided on medical studies in Kiev and graduated in 1876, getting a job of a practicing physician in a small town of Zwinogródka (12,000 inhabitants), in Kiev province. In order to deepen his general medical knowledge in the years 1876–1877 he went abroad

visiting numerous medical centers in France, Germany and Austria-Hungary. In Vienna he became acquainted with the famous Allgemeines Kraukenhaus, where he among others visited the internal medicine ward. In Paris he became interested in anthropology, attending lectures given by Pierre Paul Broca [3].

In Zwinogródka, where a total of 4 physicians were working at that time, Talko-Hryniewicz ran a broad range profile practice, dealing mostly with the cases of endemic and epidemic contagious diseases. The young Pole remembered the aspects of the job of a provincial physician without affection, describing later the years devoted to it as particularly tiring, onerous, time-consuming, coming down to defined stereotypes and ruining his health. It was then, when he realized that his intellectual interests induced him to undertake anthropological research. Led by curiosity, he drew his attention to burial mounds in the vicinity of Ryżanówka, which he excavated and explored.

The aforementioned opinions, as well as financial problems, influenced his decision to leave Ukraine and set off for Siberia, where the salaries of physicians taking the job voluntarily were quite high. He settled with his wife (they married just before leaving for Siberia in 1891) in a small town of Troitskosovsk (8,000 inhabitants), close to the Mongolian border. His duties as a district physician, apart from diagnosis and therapy, included expert and forensic medicine activities in various sanitary committees, as well as autopsies [4]. Within the area of his competence, 11 physicians took care of a population of approximately 70,000 people.

In 1899, Talko-Hryniewicz was transferred to Urga, the capital of Mongolia, to fight a spreading plague epidemic. He was given credit for recognition of a particular species of rodents, i.e. Mongolian marmots, as main vectors within the area of an epidemic [5].

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Received: November 21, 2007. Accepted in final form: November 28, 2007.

Conflict of interest: none declared.

Pol Arch Med Wewn. 2007; 117 (11-12): 531-533

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HISTORY OF INTERNAL MEDICINE IN POLAND

In 1908, after 16 years of medical practice, Julian Talko-Hryncewicz left Siberia and moved to Krakow to take the Chair of Anthropology at the Jagiellonian University.

During the World War I he found himself in Russia again, where in 1915 he was assigned a task of establishing the no 245 field hospital in Petersburg for Buriat soldiers, fighting in the war. He managed that field hospital for 2 years [6].

In 1917, he came to Kiev, where he gave lectures on anthropology in the Polish University College (Polskie Uniwersyteckie Kolegium). In independent Poland he established the Anthropology Department at Stefan Batory University in Vilnius and again became head of the Chair of Anthropology at the Jagiellonian University. He died in Krakow on April 26, 1936 [7].

The scientific achievements of Julian Talko-Hryncewicz within the medical field comprised numerous publications in the journals *Medycyna*, *Gazeta Lekarska* and *Przegląd Lekarski*, where he described various diseases and his own therapeutic experiences from his work in Ukraine. A quite interesting kind of medical publications were *Letters from Western Country about Medical Relations and Health Condition of the Province* (*Listy z zachodniego kraju o stosunkach lekarskich i stanie zdrowotnym prowincji*) and *Letters from Zwinogródka* (*Korespondencje ze Zwinogródki*) [8]. In 1890, his publication about plica appeared. However, his crowning achievement was a book entitled "Outline of Folk Medicine in Southern Rus" („Zarys lecznictwa ludowego na Rusi południowej”), published in Krakow in 1893. [9]. It was preceded by articles in Russian printed in periodicals *Zyemsky Vrach* and *Vyestnik Yevropy*.

His stay in Siberia aroused his interest in exotic Tibetan medicine (A "Word about Tibetan Medicine and its Relation to Folklore"/"Kilka słów o medycynie tybetańskiej i jej stosunku do folkloru", 1898). A result of his trip to Mongolia was a publication in Russian entitled "O chumnykh zabolievaniakh v Mongolii" (Plague Incidence in Mongolia). On his return to homeland, large publications entitled "Antropologia i jej stosunek do medycyny" (Anthropology and its Relation to Medicine) and "Antropologia i medycyna" (Anthropology and Medicine) were printed in the journal *Przegląd Lekarski* (1904 and 1914) [10].

As compared to vast literary achievements in anthropology, strictly medical publications constitute a tiny, but significant part of the scientific activity of Julian Talko-Hryncewicz [11].

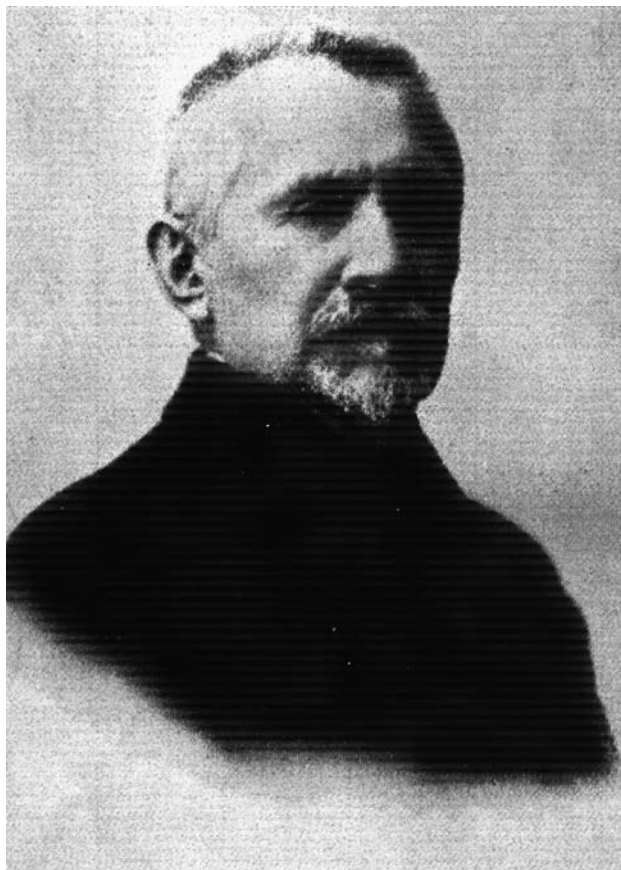


Fig. Julian Talko-Hryncewicz. A picture taken from a book by Antoni Kuczyński "Syberia. Czterysta lat polskiej diaspory", Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków, Ossolineum, 1993, p. 324

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