

# Otorhinolaryngology teaching at the Warsaw University in 1920–1939

## Nauczanie otorynolaryngologii na Uniwersytecie Warszawskim w latach 1920–1939

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### ABSTRACT:

**Introduction:** Before the Department and Chair of Otorhinolaryngology was established, scientific and professional activity on the ENT field was carried out in others specialist departments, including internal and surgery departments, as well as in hospital outpatient clinics and clinics dealing with ear, nose and larynx diseases. Otorhinolaryngologist got involved in this activity. The Chair of Otorhinolaryngology at the University of Warsaw was established on June 1, 1920, while the Department on January 15, 1921 at Elektoralna Street 12 in Warsaw was opening.

**Aim:** In this paper we discuss on the otorhinolaryngology student's teaching in the newly opened Chair and Department, taking into account staff, housing, teaching aids and legal acts issued at that time.

### KEYWORDS:

history, Otorhinolaryngology Clinic in Warsaw, student teaching

### STRESZCZENIE:

**Wstęp:** Przed powstaniem Katedry i Kliniki Otorhinolaryngologii działalność naukową i zawodową w tej dziedzinie prowadzono na innych oddziałach specjalistycznych, w tym również internistycznych i chirurgicznych, a także w: ambulatoriach przy szpitalnych, lecznicach i gabinetach zajmujących się chorobami uszu, nosa i krtani. W działalność tę angażowali się przede wszystkim pasjonaci otorynolaryngologii. Katedra Otorhinolaryngologii na Uniwersytecie Warszawskim utworzona została 1 czerwca 1920 r., natomiast otwarcie Kliniki odbyło się 15 stycznia 1921 r. przy ul. Elektoralnej 12.

**Cel:** W niniejszej pracy omówiono naukę studentów otorynolaryngologii w nowo otwartej Katedrze i Klinice, uwzględniając możliwości kadrowe, lokalowe, pomoce naukowe oraz wydawane w owym czasie ustawy.

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:** historia, Klinika Otorhinolaryngologii w Warszawie, nauczanie studentów

Before the departments and clinics of ear, nose and larynx diseases were founded, otorhinolaryngology was taught at the clinics and departments of internal medicine and surgery. A milestone in the development of otorhinolaryngology as a specialty was the decision of the academic authorities to establish independent units of diseases of the ear, nose, and larynx.

The world's first Laryngology Clinic with a Department of Laryngology was established in 1870, when the authorities of the Medical Faculty of the University of Vienna allowed it to be done by Leopold Anton Dismas Schrötter von Kristelli [1].

In Poland, the year 1879 should be considered as the birth of academic laryngology, when following the habilitation at the Faculty of Medicine of the Jagiellonian University, Przemysław Wiktor Odrowąż-Pieniążek was permitted to provide free lectures in laryngology and rhinology at the Jagiellonian University [2].

The development of otolaryngology in Warsaw, remaining under Russian rule at that time, proceeded somewhat differently. Here, scientific and professional activity in the field of otorhinolaryngology was conducted in specialist departments, including internal medicine and surgical departments, as well as in hospital outpatient clinics, infirmaries, and offices dealing with diseases of the ear, nose and larynx. This activity was mostly participated by enthusiasts of otorhinolaryngology. One of such enthusiasts was Alfred Sokołowski, who in 1883 established an ENT outpatient clinic at the internal medicine ward. Admissions were available three times a week and lasted an hour and a half; there were also consultations with an otiatrician available three times per week. The ward and the outpatient clinic hosted lectures and practicals in laryngology for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> year students. That said, those were not systematic and participated only by a very small number of people [3]. As recalled by Stanisław Tuz in his memoirs, one of the first employees of the Oto-Laryngological Department and

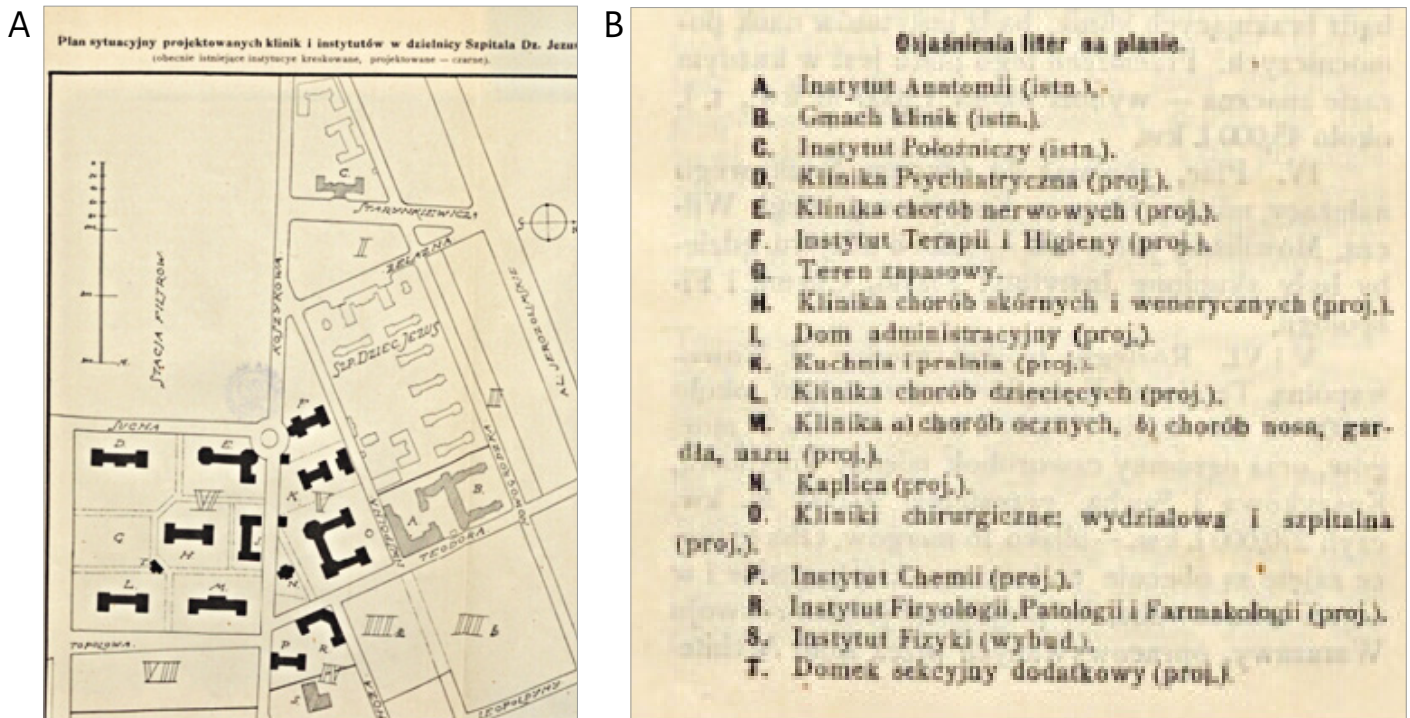


Fig. 1. (A, B) Situational scheme of the planned clinics [6].

Clinic in Warsaw: "There was no academic department at the University, and lectures were conducted by only one assistant (dr. Stamirowski in my time). Warsaw laryngologists usually imported their knowledge from Vienna or Berlin" [4]. The lack of a department for ear, nose, pharynx, and larynx diseases at the Imperial University of Warsaw had a negative impact on the education of future doctors: students graduating from the Faculty of Medicine had no idea about the diagnosis and treatment of even the most common diseases of these organs [5].

The idea of establishing an academic otorhinolaryngology clinic at the Faculty of Medicine or a separate medical university appears in many publications from this period. When the German occupation authorities started the University of Warsaw during World War I, there even emerged specific projects for it. In a paper from 1915, S. Orłowski outlines the future Polish Medical University and states the place (Fig. 1.) and the number (60) of beds in the future academic clinic [6].

In Warsaw, otorhinolaryngology as a scientific discipline began to thrive after the Department of Otolaryngology was established. The date of the establishment should be considered as June 1, 1920, when Feliks Erbrich was appointed associate professor of laryngology and otitis by a decree of the Minister of Internal Affairs. In turn, the opening of the Otolaryngology Clinic took place on January 15, 1921 at Elektoralna 12 Street. The inaugural lecture was given by prof. F. Erbrich [7, 8].

Pursuant to the Act on Academic Schools of July 13, 1920, the academic year at universities was divided into 3 trimesters (quarters), each lasting 10 lecture weeks [9]. It was assumed that a school year should last at least 180 lecture days, not including

the examination period. The teaching included lectures and practicals under the supervision of professors and associate professors. The regulation of the Minister of Religious Denominations and Public Education of October 18, 1920 on the organization of medical studies at state universities established that medical studies were to last 5 years and one quarter, i.e., 16 semesters. Each one-year course was divided into 3 semesters (semester I – October 1–December 15, semester II – January 1–March 15, semester III – April 1–June 15 [10]). According to the ordinance, theoretical lectures were not obligatory, while practicals, seminars and clinical lectures were. The schedule of lectures and practicals in otorhinolaryngology was as follows: Otology Clinic (original wording) – 30 hours, Rynological and Laryngological Clinic (original wording) – 40 hours on the 5<sup>th</sup> course (5<sup>th</sup> year of studies). It was an hourly minimum, which could be raised by the Faculty Council. Six examination commissions were established. There was no otorhinolaryngology exam, but there was a colloquium. After the fifth year of studies, from June 15 to July 7, it was possible to attempt a colloquium from laryngology with rhinology and otitis (original spelling). If someone did not pass the test after the 15<sup>th</sup> semester, the retake exam could take place only after the sixteenth semester. The colloquiums could be repeated 3 times with the consent of the Faculty Council, while the subsequent approach to the colloquium required the consent of the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Education.

Prof. F. Erbrich started lectures on otolaryngology already in the first semester of 1920 (i.e., from October 1). The lectures took place for 4 hours a week: on Wednesdays and Fridays for one hour, usually from 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., and on Saturdays for 2 hours – from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. They included: anatomy, physiology, pathology, and the clinical features of diseases of the ears,

nose, pharynx, larynx, trachea, and esophagus. The lectures were conducted using the demonstrative method, i.e. a presentation of otorhinolaryngological patients. Prior to the opening of the Clinic in 1921, patients diagnosed with otorhinolaryngological diseases from other clinics were presented. Lectures and practical classes involved the demonstration of minor procedures, such as: tamponade of the nasal vessels, incision of peritonsillar abscess, foreign body removal, tracheostomy, broncho-esophagocopy and other similar procedures.

Starting April 1, 1922, daily two-hour practicals (from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.) were conducted for groups of 6 people, each of whom initially practiced otorhinolaryngological examinations on themselves, then on patients. Students learned not only research, but also the diagnosis and treatment of otorhinolaryngological diseases. They were taught to perform the simplest and most necessary procedures, such as: ear clearing with the Politzer maneuver, rinsing the nose, ear, pharynx, injection into the larynx, tamponade of the nasal vessels and others. Moreover, students received a permanent patient for whom they established and kept a medical history [11–22]. While practical classes were also conducted by assistants, lectures were delivered solely by prof. F. Erbrich. After the habilitation in 1934 of D. Zuberbie and in 1935 of Henryk Lewenfisz, some of the lectures were conducted by newly qualified habilitated doctors.

On March 16, 1928, a new ordinance of the Minister of Religious Denominations and Public Education was published [23]. University education would continue to last 5 years and one quarter, i.e., 16 semesters. The division of the academic year into 3 semesters was also preserved (semester I – October 1–December 12, II – semester January 8–March 20, III semester April 20–June 30), which totaled 30 weeks. The first year of studies covered semesters – I, II, III; the second year of studies – IV, V, VI; further years – VII – XVI. Classes in oto-rhino-ENT clinics (original spelling) included 70 hours of lectures and 30 hours of practical exercises.

All lectures and practicals mentioned in the regulation were obligatory. The regulation also allowed for lectures and non-obligatory practicals. The Faculty Council determined which of these optional classes and lectures were recommended. There were 7 groups of exams. Otorhinolaryngology belonged to group VI, along with: surgery, ophthalmology, obstetrics and gynecology. All the exams from the above group had to be passed within 2 weeks.

In accordance with the regulation, there were also changes in the conduct of lectures and classes with students at the Clinic. From September 1, 1928, lectures for the fourth year were conducted in the second semester for 2 hours a week. The lectures were held: on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:00 to 13:00 (in the years 1924–1935), on Thursdays from 12:30 to 14:30 (in the years 1935–1937), on Thursdays from 11:00 to 1:00 p.m. (in the years 1937–1939) and in the third semester for 2 hours a week: on Wednesdays and Fridays from 11:00 to 12:00 (in 1928–1929), on Wednesdays from 9:00 to 10:00, on Fridays from 11:00 to 12:00 (in years 1929–1930), on Saturdays from 10:30 to 12:30 (in years 1930–1937). Later for 3 hours a week: on Mondays from

5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. and Wednesdays from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. (in the years 1937–1937). Practical classes were conducted in the second and third semesters, 1 hour a week in individual groups, while from 1935 to 1937 only in the third semester, 1 hour on Saturday from 12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. From 1937, there was decreased demand on the practical training of students. From that moment, in the second and third semester of the fourth year, practicals were conducted every day, except for Saturdays, for 3 hours from 8:00 to 11:00.

For the fifth year of studies, lectures in otorhinolaryngology were scheduled for the first semester. They were allocated 3 hours a week and were held on Tuesdays from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m., Fridays from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. (in 1928–1931), on Thursdays from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., on Fridays from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. (in years 1931–1936) and 2 hours a week on Fridays from 11:00 a.m. to 13:00 p.m. (in years 1936–1939). Practical classes in this semester and for the fourth year lasted 1 hour weekly, and from 1937 they were held every day, except Saturdays, for 3 hours from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. The lectures were conducted by prof. F. Erbrich. In the wake of the professor's illness, lectures in semesters I and III in the academic year 1930–1931 were conducted by H. Lewenfisz.

There were also classes and optional lectures:

- in the academic year 1929–1930 it was immediate care in the field of laryngology led by H. Lewenfisz,
- 1935–1936 – propaedeutics of ear diseases (H. Lewenfisz) and methods of examination and diagnosis of diseases of the nose, pharynx, and larynx (D. Zuberbie),
- 1936–1937 – pathological physiology and physiology of the vestibular system (H. Lewenfisz), methods of examining and diagnosing diseases of the upper respiratory and digestive tract (D. Zuberbie),
- 1937–1938 – physiology and pathology of the vestibular system (H. Lewenfisz), general diagnosis of diseases of the pharynx, nose and larynx (D. Zuberbie),
- 1938–1939 – physiology and pathology of the vestibular system (H. Lewenfisz), methods of research and diagnosis of diseases of the nose and lateral sinuses (D. Zuberbie).

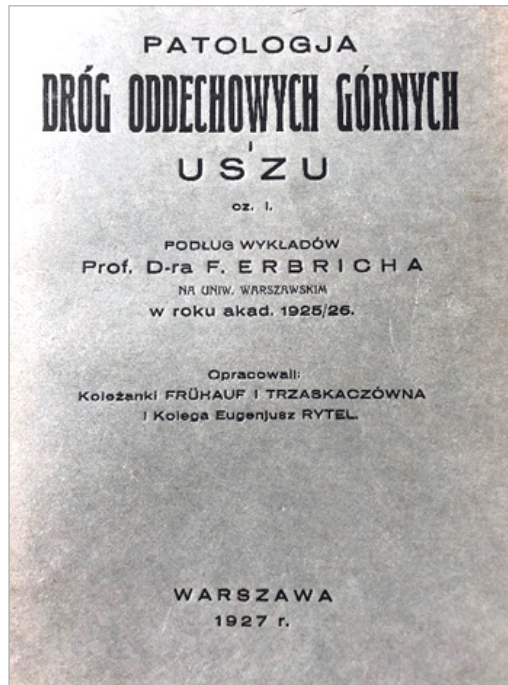
In addition to lectures at the Faculty of Medicine, they were also conducted in other units: the State Dental Institute, later the Academy of Dentistry (prof. F. Erbrich), at the Warsaw School of Nursing, the Polish Red Cross School of Nursing, the Radium Institute (doc. D. Zuberbie).

Teaching took place in difficult circumstances. The clinic did not have separate spaces for teaching and research purposes. The lectures were held in the lecture hall of the 1st Department of Internal Medicine, located away from the Clinic. Since its inception, the clinic was located together with the Eye Clinic on the ground floor in the 4th pavilion, separated from the building complex of the Holy Spirit at 12 Elektoralna Street.

The patients demonstrated during the lectures could not always be transported because of their condition. Sometimes patients



**Fig. 2.** Pre-war model of the larynx (property of the author).



**Fig. 3.** Book by prof. F. Erbrich (property of the author).



**Fig. 4.** Collection of old prints in the Clinic's library.

refused to attend the lecture, arguing it with fear of catching a cold. Due to the lack of rooms, practicals were carried out in the hustle and bustle of the emergency room. Despite the unfavorable conditions, the entire staff of the Clinic endeavored to maintain a high level of education. The students had the opportunity to voluntarily attend the clinic and learn in practice during the clinic's working hours, both at the clinic and at the sick ward. The library, located in the professor's room, could be used by doctors and students. Magazines available on site and books were borrowed home under supervision. Students not only had the opportunity to borrow journals and books, but could also use anatomical specimens at the museum, the number of which increased every year – from 47 in 1929 to 75 in 1938. The clinic's resources included a projection apparatus used for teaching purposes demonstrating slides, drawings, microscope slides and pictures. To illustrate lectures and practical classes, the clinic had an extensive collection of: boards, slides, foldable models and phantoms (Fig. 2.). Teaching aids were constantly supplemented, increasing the collection from 115 in 1929 to 240 in 1938. They were purchased at home and abroad.

Initially, students used older textbooks and books by Polish authors: Taczanowski, Jurasz, Pieniążek, Sędziak, Żebrowski and foreign authors in German or French – Denker, Brünings, Körner and others. Medicine learners could also benefit from the reading of prof. F. Erbrich. One of them, "Examination methods of larynx, trachea and bronchi" appeared in 1919, while the second, entitled "Examination methods of the respiratory apparatus", which he co-authored – was published in 1920. Based on the lectures by prof. F. Elbrich and thanks to the efforts of the Medical Association, 1927 saw the publishing of the book "Pathology of the upper respiratory tract and ears" (Fig. 3.).

There was no Polish textbook on otorhinolaryngology covering all the issues involved in the subject. Students derived their

knowledge from lectures and textbooks in German or French by Denker, Brünings, Körner and others. It was not until 1926–1933 that a 4-part textbook written in the mother tongue by prof. Jan Szmurło from the Vilnius clinic was published: "Diseases of the nose and nasopharynx" (1926), "Diseases of the mouth, pharynx and esophagus" (1930), "Diseases of the larynx and trachea" (1931), "Ear diseases" (1933), which was used to study otorhinolaryngology for many generations. The clinic also had journals: "Zeitschrift für Ohrenheilkunde", "Archiv für Ohrenheilkunde", "Revue de Laryngologie", "Laryngoscope" and many more. Most of them, owing to the courage of the staff during World War II, were rescued from the burning hospital. They are currently held in the Clinic's library (Fig. 4.).

In different years, there were from 120 to 210 students present during lectures. Turnout ranged from 75 to 100%. Medical exams in particular fields were extremely difficult. 5 to 29% of students failed to pass individual groups of subjects. In the 1936/1937 academic year, almost every fourth student taking the exam received a failing grade [24].

According to the ordinance of 1928, otorhinolaryngology was completed with an examn and not – as before – a colloquium. The passing rates for exams are presented in the table below. It should be assumed that the requirements were high: between 1931 and 1937, there were only 2 people who passed successfully, and satisfactory grades dominated [25–38].

The first full-time employees of the Clinic were: F. Erbrich, Stanisław Tuz, Jerzy Rogoziński. Over time, the team of the Clinic was joined by other employees who worked as academic teachers in different years. According to the studies "Composition of the University and List of Lectures at the University of Warsaw", the teaching community included [11–22, 25–38]:

**Tab. I.** Otorhinolaryngology exams in particular academic years.

Years	Failing grade	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Total
1931/32	7	83	36	-	126
1932/33	13	138	22	-	173
1933/34	37	165	20	-	222
1935/36	25	136	26	2	189
1936/37	13	148	22	-	183

- Prof. Erbrich Feliks Antoni (December 16, 1874–November 8, 1938) – Head of the Clinic in 1921–1938,
- Abramowicz Ludwik (January 14, 1897–1942 or 1943) in the years 1924–1939,
- Godlewski Jan Marcin (February 2, 1897–June 13, 1960) in the years 1926–1930,
- Grocholski Bronisław (August 30, 1869–May 28, 1934) in the years 1922–1928,
- Lewenfisz-Wojnarowski Henryk (January 31, 1894–September 27, 1956) in the years 1922–1939,
- Mitrynowicz (Mitrinovic) Modrzejewska Aleksandra Salomea p.v. Stębowska Salomea (April 1, 1898–June 5, 1975) in the years 1934–1939,
- Rogoziński Jerzy Stanisław (June 22, 1884–April 1940 [?]) in the years 1921–1939,

- Srebrny Jan (June 15, 1900–March 2, 1980) in the years 1931–1939,
- Szymański Jan Duklan (July 14, 1903–February 23, 1984) in the years 1934–1939,
- Tuz Stanisław Jan (October 21, 1879 – [?]) in the years 1921–1928,
- Zuberbier Dionizy Jakób (October 5, 1900–April 1940 [?]) in the years 1925–1939, Head of the Clinic – November 1938–August 1939.

World War II interrupted the development of Polish otolaryngology. Its revival took place after the war, and the scientific contribution as well as pedagogical and organizational expertise of Warsaw otolaryngologists working in the Second Polish Republic created the foundation for establishing modern otolaryngology.

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