

**IN MEMORIAM**

**PROFESSOR WALDEMAR LECH OLSZEWSKI, PhD, MD**  
**September 3, 1931 - November 8, 2020**

**A. Szuba**

President, International Society of Lymphology and President, Polish Angiological Society



*Professor Waldemar Olszewski*

Professor Waldemar Lech Olszewski passed away on November 8th.

He was born on September 3, 1931 in Poland. Graduated in 1954, he passed Board in Surgery exams in 1962, received degrees of Doctor of Philosophy in 1962 and Doctor of Science in 1968. Since 1970 Olszewski has been an associate professor at the Department of Surgery of the Warsaw Medical Academy, and the Medical Research Center at Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. In 1978 he received a full professor degree at the same centers, and became chairman of the Clinical Department of Surgery, Ministry of Internal Affairs/Polish Academy of Science Hospital, Warsaw.



*Andrzej Szuba and Waldemar Olszewski*

Professor Olszewski received postgraduate training at the Hammersmith Hospital in London from 1962 to 1963, then at Harvard Medical School in Boston, from 1968 to 1970. He worked at City Hospital, Warsaw, and then Dept. of Surgery, Medical Academy, and Medical Research Center, Warsaw as head of Dept. of Surgical Research & Transplantation and since 1997 as Chief of Clinical Department of Surgery, Ministry of Internal Affairs/Polish Academy of Sciences Hospital, Warsaw. Other professional positions include Visiting Professor at Radiumhospitalet, Oslo, (since 1976), St. Bartholomew's Medical School, London (since 1994), Research Officer World Health Organization, Madras-Pondi-

cherry- Benares, India (since 1992).

For over 50 years Professor Olszewski carried out research on the lymphatic system. He has made many important discoveries related to lymphatic system functioning. However, Professor Olszewski's clinical and research activities were not limited to the lymphatic system and included vascular surgery, transplantation, physiology and surgery of the lymphatic system and immunology. His most important scientific contributions include designing and introducing into clinical practice the surgical lympho-venous shunts (1966), discovery of spontaneous rhythmic lymphatic contractility in humans (1980), proving that bacterial factors are responsible for development of human limb lymphedema (1994), introducing low-dose, long-term penicillin administration for prevention of chronic dermatitis and lymphangitis in Asian countries (1996), detecting the phenomenon of non-specific elimination of cell grafts (1990), preservation of tissues for transplantation in dehydrating sodium chloride (2003). His last years encompassed substantial work on fluid hydromechanics in tissue edema. Recently, he developed a new method for treating lymphedema with the aid of subcutaneously implanted silicone drains. He authored and co-authored five scientific books and over 600 research papers.

Professor Olszewski was a member of many national and international scientific societies and served as President of the: European Society for Surgical Research (1977-78), International Society of Lymphology (1989-91), and Polish Society of Immunology (1995-98). He received multiple awards and honors including: Doctor Honoris Causa -Universita di Genova (2005), Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Phlebologie Ratschow Medal (2012), Bene Merito Medal - by Polish Foreign Ministry for contributions to world medicine (2013).

I regret saying goodbye to Professor Olszewski, my teacher and mentor, and I join in pain with his family.

**Andrzej Szuba, MD, PhD**  
**President, International Society of**

**Lymphology (ISL)**  
**Professor of Medicine**  
**Wroclaw Medical University**  
**Wroclaw, Poland**

***Selected comments from International Society of Lymphology colleagues***

I am deeply shocked and saddened at the sudden demise of Professor Olszewski. We collaborated on a book during the coronavirus pandemic this year; he contributed several chapters with beautiful illustrations to the book but sadly could not see it in print. Two months ago, we talked about applying for a joint research project and meeting again in Shanghai; this plan is no longer possible. Just a month ago, he actively participated in a discussion on coronaviruses at Vasculab.

Professor Olszewski was a world pioneer of lymphology; some of his numerous contributions have exerted a great impact on my work. He initiated lymph vessel/nodal-venous anastomosis and silicone tube implantation in the surgical treatment of lymphedema. He was also famous for the human study of the composition of the lymph and intra-lymphatic pressure in physiological and pathological conditions. More renowned was his research on the bacteriology of lymphedematous tissues, and he postulated effective measures to prevent and treat inflammation-related complications. His contributions to lymphology will be remembered.

Professor Olszewski was my teacher and mentor. We first met in 1987, when he visited Hangzhou to attend an international symposium of lymphology. Since then, we exchanged numerous visits and successfully accomplished a collaborative Chinese-Polish science and technology project. He was honored as a visiting professor at Shanghai Jiao Tong University. I was commended by the Medical Centre of Polish Academy of Sciences for our scientific collaboration.

We often met at conferences and engaged in profound and productive conversations. Professor Olszewski's outstanding scientific contributions influenced me, as did his

constant inspiration and encouragement. I am deeply distressed by the loss of such a distinguished lymphologist. May his soul rest in peace.

**Ningfei Liu MD, PhD**  
**Past-President, ISL**  
**Dpet. Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery**  
**Shanghai Ninth People's Hospital**  
**Shanghai Jiao Tong University School of**  
**Medicine**  
**Shanghai, China**

Recently I have received a very sad news that Waldemar had died. He had been one of the best lymphologists in our Society. He was at the same time a special representative member of Japan- Poland Friendship Society, Japan-Polish Surgeon's Society and Japanese Society for Inflammation. That is why he had visited Japan almost every year and I had had a chance to meet him so frequently. He had visited my home with Marzana four times in all experiencing Japanese style room, bed and toilet (different from the newest shower toilet). We had visited Origami Museum (Papanese paper hand craft), Ohedo (name of old Tokyo in 17 century) Museum, tea ceremony, Japanese brush painting, metal accessory (Shppou), China tea cup making, Japanese tea ceremony, Robot museum and artificial food sample making (this found in the front window at the entrance of a Japanese restaurant). Every time we met each other, we discussed (better to say I learned) about lymphology, for example, sequential compression treatment, immunology, pseudo lymph node found in lymphedema, nature of acute bacterial complication of lymphedema, erysipelas, etc. We have lost a big treasure in lymphology. We hope he will sleep in calm for ever.

**Prof. Moriya Ohkuma, MD, PhD**  
**Past-President, ISL**  
**Kinki University, Osaka, Japan**

I am really shocked to hear of the sudden

demise of Professor Waldemar Olszewski whom I know from 1987 and collaborated with him in many research and academic activities. He introduced me into the world of international Lymphology. A life time researcher, it's a great loss to the field of Lymphology.

My heart felt condolences to his family and friends. I pray to god for his soul to Rest In peace.

**Prof. Dr. Gurusamy Manokaran, M.D.**  
**Past-President, ISL**  
**Chennai, India**

Our beloved friend Professor Waldemar Olszewski has passed away.

We have lost a really great man, scientist, wise man and a pioneer of lymphology, But his works, his activities, his experiences, his articles, his books, remain here and we must continue his brilliant work for the improvement of our lymphology. I will miss him (he was always very kind with gentlemanly behavior and we had many beautiful times) and I extend my deep condolence to Marzanna Zaleska and all Waldemar's family members. I pray to God for his soul to Rest In Peace.

As a President of the next World Congress of Lymphology in Athens in September of 2021, this congress will be dedicated in the memory of two very important great pioneers and leaders of Lymphology — M. Foeldi and W. Olszewski.

**Evangelos Dimakakos, MD, PhD**  
**President, 28<sup>th</sup> World Congress of**  
**Lymphology**  
**Head, Vascular-Lymphological Center**  
**European Teaching Center of UEMS for**  
**Angiology/Vascular Medicine 3<sup>rd</sup> University**  
**Internal Medicine of Hospital 'SOTIRIA'**  
**Athens, Greece**

With huge respect, I would like to say goodbye to Waldemar Olszewski, who has

been a gentleman in the field of lymphology for a long time...50 years... He has retired a little earlier than we have, and is waiting for us in a wide space without limits to continue the dialogue and the reflection of all those things we are passionate about. I have learned a lot from our community, including Waldemar. I am life long grateful. Farewell, Waldemar – you have been a teacher ... professor. Like a prophet of lymphovenous anastomosis, you have indicated the directions in lymphology which have already become pages of History.

The artery is a road, the vein is the walking and the lymph expresses life.

**Acad. Prof. Dr. C.M Papendieck, FACS  
Past-President, ISL  
Angiopediatria  
Buenos Aires, Argentina**

This is sad news. I remember the first (1988) time when I met Professor Olszewski in San Francisco, and he did surgery on one of my patients, and spoke during a lymphedema support group. Patients loved him. He attended every NLN conference starting 1994 through 2016. What a Legacy!!!! He will be missed.

**Saskia Thiadens, RN  
Founder and Past-President,  
National Lymphedema Network  
Executive Committee Member, ISL**

As so many of you, I was shocked to hear of Waldemar Olszewski's sudden passing on November 8, 2020. I truly had expected him to live to be 100. A true pioneer in lymphology, I have known Waldemar since 1973 when he won a coveted medal for his outstanding scientific contribution to the 4th International

Congress of Lymphology in Tucson. Since then, we (together with Charles Witte until his death) continued to meet (agree and disagree about scientific matters but always with mutual respect) several times a year around the world. Throughout this time, and during his tenure as ISL President, he has been a shining light and prodigious contributor to our international community during the explosive growth of the discipline of lymphology. Many of you have already cited some of these contributions but the one that resonates the most with me is the message he gave to the Congress in Montreal in 1981 – “put the lymph system back in the body”, after his having become somewhat dismayed by the then prevalent (and continuing) emphasis on mathematical modeling and isolated organs, pieces of organs, and molecules ex vivo rather than taking on the challenge, as he had, of rigorous in vivo and human studies of the lymphatic system.

**Marlys H. Witte, M.D.  
Secretary-General, ISL  
Professor of Surgery, Neurosurgery, and  
Pediatrics  
University of Arizona College of Medicine  
Tucson, AZ**



*Dr. Olszewski and colleagues at the 27th World Congress of Lymphology, Buenos Aires, Argentina, September 2019*