

GHEORGHE LITARCZEK. ANNIVERSARY OF 130 YEARS FROM BIRTH (1888–1954)

Constantin IONESCU-TÎRGOVIȘTE

Accepted July 6, 2018

The Romanian historiography was less descriptive about the earlier period of Romanian diabetology, matter which can be explained due to its belated appearance in the field of Romanian diabetology. The beginnings of this specialty, it so happened, had taken place in the troubled period of the beginning of the XX-th century, by the midst of which it had produced dramatic changes in most countries of the world, including Romania. Professor of internal medicine, Gheorghe Litarczek, is placed amongst the prime figures of medicine in that period, him being non other than the father of the founder of Romanian anesthesiology, George Litarczek. The last one was born in Boston, as his parents found themselves under a Rockefeller scholarship, in the bastion city of diabetology in the USA, Joslin Clinic.

From there he came to Romania, before the Second World War began, when he opened a private office for internal medicine, diabetes being the main concern, a disease for which there were few diagnoses made at that time. It was the period that followed the one in which insulin was discovered and which impelled diabetes on a much larger scale compared to those in the past. Although the therapeutic means for the majority of forms of diabetes were rudimentary in manner (nor biguanidins, nor sulphonylureeics were introduced for treatment), the patients still received therapeutic and dietetic references, associated with antidiabetic teas from folk medicine.



Among the writings that we found in the illustrious professor's bibliography published by Gheorghe Litarczek we mention" Contribution aux relations qui existent entre l'obesite et le diabete, a l'aide des

epreuves fonctionnelles de l'appareil insulaire" (Bull. Mem. Soc. Med. Des Hospitaux). In 1943, he publishes "The Diabetes Problem" (The Hospital 63: 3-4, 57-69).

In 1948 he publishes an important work, "Elements of Physiopathology of General Nutrition", in which the biochemical problem of diabetes, analyzed profoundly, is reminiscent on the Rockefeller scholarship probation (1925) and of the collaboration with professors Folin and Benedict, which remain in the history of diabetology because of their method to determine glycemia (see chapter 1, "The History of Diabetes"). From 1949 until 1954, he ran as Professor the Medical Clinic of Cantacuzino Hospital, thus approaching the Nutrition Clinic of Prof I. Pavel, being in the same building, one level apart. It must be mentioned that in "Elements of Physiopathology of General Nutrition" the future Professor Radu Paun (1915-2005) contributed as co-author, which discreetly promoted the biochemical current of diseases, in "Tratatul de medicina" in 5 volumes (1953-1958) and in "Tratatul de medicina" in 13 volumes (1976-2001).

Returning to the monography "Elements of Physiopathology of General Nutrition" we mention that it represents, in fact, a successful mixture of physiology, plenty of biochemistry of the best quality, but also of clinical medicine. The author tries to explain the metabolically pathology, by binding unbalanced nourishment with the appearance of biochemical alterations, which are characteristic to metabolic pathology. The post face of the writing is extremely interesting, it synthesizes the registered progresses made in those years of agitation, after the war, in cellular and molecular biology, which announced the upcoming revolution, due to the introduction of the electronic microscope in medicine, of which George Emil Palade benefited by fully, him being also on a Rockefeller scholarship and afterwards through his major contributions in the knowing of the mitochondria, the endoplasmic reticulum and of the ribosomes (which he discovered and for which he received the Nobel Prize in 1974), he will become one of the founders of modern biology. As for Gheorghe Litarczek, already returned in Romania in those treacherous times, in a scientific nothingness, he imparted alongside his colleagues that remained in the country, the same sad destiny: they will be forgotten in a shadowy corner for a half a century. Is our duty to pay a tribute of recognition to Gheorghe Litarczek, one of the pioneers of the Diabetological Science, interposed between Nicolae C. Paulescu (1869-1931) and Ion Pavel (1897-1991).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

With tanks to Proffesor George Litarczek for providing us material regarding the activity of late Gheorghe Litarczek.