

## Professional associations of pharmacists in Lithuania: history and directions of activity

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**Key words:** *history of pharmacy, professional societies.*

**Summary.** *The aim of this study was to describe the historical development of pharmaceutical organisations, their tasks and ability to fulfill them.*

*In the XIXth century a rapid development of the science of pharmacy influenced a need for scientific collaboration. Thus, in 1819 Department of Pharmacy of Vilnius Medical Society was founded by Vilnius chemists. The main directions of the activity of the members of this department were the following: scientific investigations, solution of practical tasks, spreading of pharmaceutical information, popularization of the knowledge of pharmaceutical science. However, a progressive dynamic development of pharmacy was hindered by unfavorable political and economic factors.*

*In 1917, Lithuanians working in Russia united in a "Society of Lithuanian Pharmacists". The operation of the society was concerned with nationality, which was the main and the only direction of activity.*

*There were four pharmaceutical organizations acting in the Independent Republic of Lithuania (1918-1940). In 1940, after Lithuania's annexation to the USSR, all pharmaceutical professional associations were eliminated.*

*In 1948, Lithuanian Scientific Society of Pharmacists was founded. Despite its professional tasks it had also to proclaim ideological aims.*

**Conclusion.** *Professional activity was influenced by unfavorable political conditions in the country. Independence of social professional associations was limited by czarist Russia, as well as by Soviet authorities. Department of Pharmacy of Vilnius Medical Society had a great influence upon the progress of pharmacy of that time.*

*Associations acting in the Independent Republic of Lithuania were able to defend their business interests, participate in international activity, deal with the affairs of science, the heritage of the pharmacy, and representation of their profession.*

The beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the so-called "golden age" for European pharmacy. Such a rise was distinct in the history of Lithuanian pharmacy. At that time a wish of pharmacists to join into professional societies became more and more urgent not only due to the defense of their interests, representation of their occupation, ability to share the newest scientific information. A great influence upon the decision was made by the scientific progress made in the spheres of pharmacy and chemistry, a theoretical training of pharmacists at universities and their participation in research. A rapid development of the science of pharmacy influenced a need for scientific collaboration. Pharmaceutical activity, which was being regulated quicker and quicker, stimulated an organized defense of their interests. In one of the scientific centers in

Europe, i.e. in Vilnius University, pharmacy has been a subject since 1785. The policy of the university and quite a big economical independence induced the arrival of advanced lecturers from Western Europe (1). A qualified university training of specialists conditioned the formation of a new educated generation of chemists, who did not limit themselves to their business only but were also eager to learn about the newest investigations in the spheres of pharmacy, medicine, chemistry, as well as to take part in scientific activity. For the fulfillment of these aims a professional organization was created, which dates back to 1805. This year marks the foundation of Vilnius Medical Society. In due course of time chemists became unsatisfied for the fact that the main concern of the society was focused on the problems of medicine; meanwhile, the affairs of pharmacy staid apart (2). Thus,

in 1819, the Department of Pharmacy of Vilnius Medical Society was founded by Vilnius chemists. The main directions of the activity of the members of this department were the following:

*Scientific investigations and their spheres:*

1. Botany.
2. Pharmacognosy.
3. Biochemistry.
4. Drug chemistry.
5. Phytochemistry, etc.

*Solution of practical tasks*

1. To improve the technologies of the preparation of drugs.
2. To seek for local raw materials suitable for the production of drugs instead of the imported ones.
3. To investigate the quality of medicinal materials, in order to put a stop for falsifications.

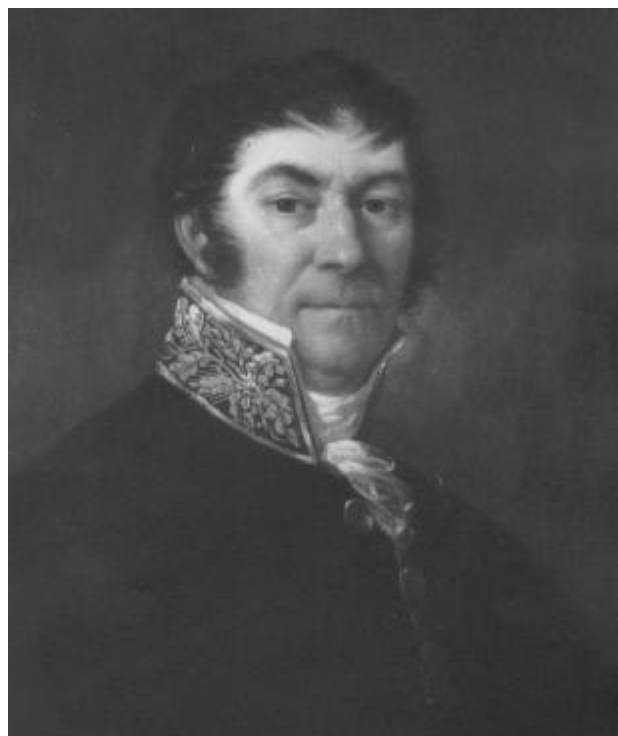
*Spreading of pharmaceutical information, popularization of the knowledge of pharmaceutical science.*

1. Publication of a periodical magazine.
2. Establishment of a library.
3. Co-operation with other professional associations.
4. Presentation of research results in the meetings of the Department of Pharmacy.

In 1820 a periodical Polish journal "Pamiętnik farmaceutyczny Wilenski" ("Notes of Vilnius Pharmacy") was started to be published by the members of the pharmaceutical organization. Its editor was professor Johan Frydrich Wolfgang (1775-1859), the initiator of the establishment of the Department of Pharmacy (3) (Figure 1).

The journal consisted of 47 percent of original publications; the rest were translations from European pharmaceutical journals. The works of the most prominent researchers, such as Johann Bartholomaeus Trommsdorff, Louis Niellas Vanquelin, Jahan Wolfgang Dobereiner, etc. were being published in the journal (4). Owing to this, scientific news could reach the subscribers of the journal rather quickly.

Speaking about other pharmaceutical professional associations established in the empire of czarist Russia, it should be mentioned that the first association of the kind was founded in Riga in 1803. It was Riga chemical pharmaceutical society, called "Rigaer Chemisch-pharmazeutischen Gesellschaft" (5). St. Petersburg Pharmaceutical Society has been active since 1818 as well (6). According to professor Josef Frank, the initiator of Vilnius Medical Society, professional progress is influenced by some main factors, such as university training of specialists, professional society and a periodical edition (7). It was in Vilnius where these



**Fig. 1. Prof. Johan Frydrich Wolfgang (1779-1859)**

The initiator of the establishment of the Department of Pharmacy of Vilnius Medical Society. Editor of the journal "Pamiętnik farmaceutyczny Wilenski" ("Notes of Vilnius Pharmacy")

institutions, supplementing each other, were established first of all:

Pharmaceutical lectures in Vilnius (1785-1842).

Department of Pharmacy of Vilnius Medical Society (1819-1915).

Professional periodical publications:

"Pamiętnik Farmaceutyczny Wilenski" 1820-1822.

"Dziennik Medycyny, Chirurgii i Farmacji" 1822-1824, 1830.

However, a progressive dynamic development of pharmacy was hindered by unfavorable political and economic factors. Vilnius chemists had to stop the publication of a periodical journal first of all. This was due to the shortage of finance (8). Moreover, persecutions of university lecturers, students and Vilnius intelligentsia, organized by czarist government, were more and more urgent. This led to a decreasing number of progressive professors coming from abroad, meanwhile working people tried to leave the town. Only people loyal to the czarist government were suitable to lead the university (1).

After the rebellion of 1830-1831 czar's government closed Vilnius University, and after ten years, in 1842, Medical Surgery Academy, which was reorganized from the university, was closed as well. Having no center of science, chemists began to limit themselves up to

pharmaceutical practice and business interests gradually. The social activity of chemists became passive little by little, the number of the members of the society was decreasing, and only a few reports were prepared and presented during the later years of the existence of the organization (9). Nevertheless, the association still existed in a formal way.

Other Lithuanian pharmaceutical organizations were established only after the proclamation of Lithuania's independence. Meanwhile, it is necessary to refer to another association, which was established by the Lithuanian chemists abroad.

Having lost an ability to study in their native country, people used to enter universities of czarist Russia. After graduation, they most often used to stay and work in university cities. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, i.e. after long decades of the russification of Lithuanian nation, the ideas about a renewal of national identity were very urgent. Patriotic aims encouraged Lithuanian chemists to think about work and activity in their native country. Thus in 1917, Lithuanians working in Russia united in a “Society of Lithuanian Pharmacists”. The operation of the society was concerned with nationality, which was the main and the only direction of activity (10). Political events quickened the fulfillment of the tasks set by the organization. After the Russian Socialist revolution, which took place in 1917, the property of inhabitants, including drugstores, was nationalized. Lithuanians, who had lost their property, were eager to return to their independent native country.

There were four pharmaceutical organizations acting in the Independent Republic of Lithuania (1918-1940):

Union of Lithuanian Pharmacists 1921-1940.

Society of Lithuanian Pharmacists 1922-1940.

Society of Lithuanian Chemists Pharmacists 1931-1940.

Society of Lithuanian Pharmacists Employees 1932-1937.

Union of Lithuanian Pharmacists was the first professional organization established after the proclamation of independence (11). A year later a Society of Lithuanian Pharmacists was founded, which united the owners of the drugstores exclusively (12). Sources indicate several reasons of the establishment of the organization. They are the following:

1. Differentiation of the interests of employers (i.e. owners of drugstores) and employees (13).

2. Inactivity of the Union of Lithuanian Pharmacists (14).

Founders of the Society of Lithuanian Pharmacists were eager to create a strong, more influential and active

organization. They succeeded in achieving their object. A rapidly increasing number of the members of the Society of Lithuanian Pharmacists, a significant growth of the budget (15) and, apart from that, an importance of the suggestions of the organization for the solutions of state institutions might serve as the means of illustration.

The activity of the Society of Lithuanian Pharmacists could be divided into some main directions:

1. Taking part in preparing laws, which regulate pharmaceutical industry.
2. Defense of their interests seeking for more favorable business conditions.
3. Publication of a professional periodical journal.
4. Salvation of the problems of pharmaceutical ethics.
5. International activity.
6. Cultural activity.

During the first year the activity of the Society of Lithuanian Pharmacists was concentrated on the preparation of laws (16) and salvation of practical problems of drugstore business. They sought for the privileges of taxes, reduction of the costs of the supplied drugs for the members of the society (17), etc. In 1923-1940, a periodical journal “Knowledge of Pharmacy” was issued by the Society of Lithuanian Pharmacists and Union of Lithuanian Pharmacists together. During the second decade of its existence the strengthened society expanded its activity, enriching it by a cultural, charitable and international activity. In 1937, pharmacist K. Mažonas, a delegate of the society, took part in the congress of International Pharmaceutical Federation (International Pharmaceutical Federation, FIP) (18).

In 1937 Dr. T. Potjevijd, general secretary of Federation International Pharmaceutical FIP, visited the Baltic states, including Lithuania as well (19) (2 slide).

The most close and active relationships were maintained between Lithuanian pharmaceutical associations and those of Latvia and Estonia. They organized common conferences and used to share their experience (20).

Besides, the Society of Lithuanian Pharmacists granted stipends to students of pharmacy (21), took care of the heritage of the pharmacy history. In 1936, the Society of Lithuanian Pharmacists decided to establish a museum of pharmacy where a valuable collection was accumulated. However, the majority of exhibits were lost during World War the Second (22).

A big attention was paid by the Society of Lithuanian Pharmacists to the so-called “unclear” competition. Hence, “The Court of Honor” appeared in 1934. It was decided to apply great fines (even up to 1000 litas) to the members of the Society of Lithuanian Pharmacists



**Fig. 2. Dr. T. Potjevijd, general secretary of Federation International Pharmaceutique (FIP) together with the representatives of social associations of Lithuanian pharmacy 1937**  
Sitting from the left side: dr. J. Šiaulis, prof. P. Raudonikis, dr. Potjevijd, J. Makauskis. Standing: A. Gabrėnas, Pr. Stakelė, A. Mačius

who would commit an offence against ethics. The most extreme means of penalty would be dismissal from the organization (23). Yet, the search of the information about cases tried by this organization was a failure. Despite the already mentioned associations it is necessary to name two other organizations, which are Society of Lithuanian Pharmacists Employees (which declared the tasks of social equality) (24) and the Society of Undergraduates of Pharmaceutical Studies at Lithuanian University (25). In 1940, after Lithuania's annexation to the USSR, all pharmaceutical professional associations were eliminated. The most active members of the Society of Lithuanian Pharmacists (i.e. owners of drugstores) were exiled; the rest emigrated west.

After the Second World War a new historical period started in Lithuania, which had lost its independence. It was an epoch of a team like order of the Soviet Union. In 1948 Lithuanian Scientific Society of Pharmacists was founded. Despite its professional tasks it had also to proclaim ideological aims, such as:

1. Development of materialistic world outlook.
2. Popularization of Pavlov's science.
3. Propagation of the science and practice of Soviet pharmacy (26).

Yet, the society's daily concern was the affairs of their profession and pharmaceutical science.

At present there are several pharmaceutical professional organizations active in Lithuania. Their members have an ability not to bother themselves with national, political affairs, thus their attention is focus on a moderate professional activity mainly.

In view of the above-mentioned 200-year period of the activity of pharmaceutical professional associations, it can be stated that professional activity was being influenced by unfavorable political conditions in the country for the major part of this period. Independence of social professional associations was limited by czarist Russia, as well as by Soviet authorities. Nevertheless, Department of Pharmacy of Vilnius Medical Society had a great influence upon the progress of pharmacy of that time, but a period of dynamic activity was quite short due to the reasons mentioned before.

Associations acting in the Independent Republic of Lithuania proved their ability not only to defend their business interests, but also to participate in international activity, deal with the affairs of science, the heritage of the pharmacy, representation of their profession.

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