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OBITUARY

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Professor Zofia Bielanska-Osuchowska (1919–2017)

The Polish community of embryologists, morphologists, histochemists, and cell biologists has been deeply affected by the death of Professor Zofia Bielanska-Osuchowska, who passed away in Konstancin, Poland, on November 26, 2017. Professor Bielanska-Osuchowska was an outstanding representative of the scientific and academic community, and her life constitutes a significant chapter in the history of biological and medical sciences in Poland.

Zofia Bielanska-Osuchowska was born in Krakow in 1919. Her biological education began at the Philosophical Faculty of the Jagiellonian University in Krakow in 1937, but was interrupted by the German occupation and continued after the war. In 1948 she began work on her master's dissertation under supervision of Professor Z. Kraczkiewicz at the Department of Animal Cytology, Warsaw University. She obtained her master's degree in 1952 from the Jagiellonian University. In 1958, she defended her thesis and received a doctoral degree from the Faculty of Biology and Earth Sciences, Warsaw University. She began professional work in 1951 in an assistant position at the Department of Zoology, Pedagogical University in Warsaw. In 1953 she began her scientific development and professional career in the field of histology and embryology at the Department of Histology and Embryology, Veterinary Faculty, at Warsaw University of Life Sciences, where she remained until her retirement in 1990, having directed the department since 1963. She completed the habilitation procedure in 1961 and, a year later, received a docent degree (*veniam legendi*). She became a professor in 1972 and a full (ordinary) professor in 1980.

Professor Bielanska-Osuchowska's professional output includes significant achievements in research, published papers, monographs and handbooks, short embryological articles for dictionaries and encyclopedias, and as well academic activities. Her research has expanded our knowledge of the histochemistry and ultrastructure of the development of male and female gonads in a domestic pig; the endocrine glandular, hepatic, and placental function of this species and the ultrastructure of the Sertoli and gametogenetic cells in the course of spermatogenesis in a bull. As a prominent academic teacher, she met with acclaim, lecturing on embryology and histology as a part of the undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral programs at the veterinary medicine faculty of Warsaw University of Life Sciences. She also lectured as a part of the postgraduate program at Krakow Agriculture Academy (now the Agricultural University of Krakow), and in 1988 taught embryology in Italy at the veterinary medicine faculty of the University of Milan. Among her major achievements of practical use and significance for students and scientists are three editions of a textbook on embryology (*Embriologia*). Moreover, she contributed chapters on embryology to textbooks on the reproduction of farm animals. She served as the coeditor of a multivolume series on the ultrastructure of cells and tissues, which has proved of great worth to the research community. She did not cease her creative work when she retired, and her scientific activities continued for more than another 25 years. The most valuable product of this period may be the handbook *Zarys organogenezy* ("An outline of organogenesis") (PWN, 2004), which contains a contemporary interpretation of cell differentiation processes on the molecular level.

Professor Bielanska-Osuchowska contributed greatly to scientific and academic progress, being active in her home university, in the academy of sciences, and in scientific societies. The value of her work in these spheres was widely acknowledged in the embryological and cell biological community in Poland and abroad. At the Polish Academy of Sciences, she was a member of three committees: veterinary sciences,

cytobiology, and animal reproduction, and was also involved in the electron microscopy commission. She was a president of the Polish Anatomical Society, vice-president of the Polish Histochemical and Cytochemical Society, and a member of the European Association of Veterinary Anatomists. She was also a coeditor of Folia Morphologica, chairperson of the editorial board of Advances in Cell Biology, and a member of the editorial board of Folia Histochemica et Cytobiologica. She took part in organizing the Eighth World Congress of Physiology of Reproduction (Krakow, 1976), a number of embryological conferences and histochemical symposia, and the Human and Environment conference. As an expression of appreciation for her engagement and the results of her efforts, Professor Bielanska-Osuchowska was granted honorary membership of the Polish Anatomical Society, the Polish Histochemical and Cytochemical Society, and the Bulgarian Society of Anatomists, Histologists, and Embryologist. In 2001, the Polish Histochemical and Cytochemical Society awarded her the Bene Meritus distinction.

Special emphasis is due to Professor Bielanska-Osuchowska's inspiration, management, and organization (with Professor Jerzy Kawiak) of the "progress in cell biology autumn school", which has run annually for over 30 years. Her lectures on modern scientific discoveries published in Advances in Cell Biology proved to be an important inspiration for readers and researchers in Poland.

Professor Bielanska-Osuchowska received distinctions from her own university, national bodies, and scientific societies. Warsaw University of Life Sciences conferred an honorary doctorate on her. She received a number of scientific awards from the Ministry of Science, the Ministry of National Education, and her own university. The Polish state honored her with the Order of Polonia Restituta, the Medal of the National Education Commission, and the Meritorious Teacher title.

Summarizing Professor Bielanska-Osuchowska's achievements, we express deep appreciation and thanks for her significant investment in progress in embryology and cell biology, and for her inspiring role in the scientific community.

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