

## REVIEW ARTICLE

## WOMEN'S MODERNISM IN MEDICAL SCIENCE OF WESTERN UKRAINE – SOFIA OKUNEVSKA-MORACHEVSKA, SOFIA PARFANOVYCH AND VOLODYMYRA KRUSHELNYTSKA

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### ABSTRACT

**The aim:** The purpose of this article is to identify through the analysis of biographical and scientific Sofia Okunevska-Morachevska, Sofia Parfanovych and Volodymyra Krushelnytska common features of personal and professional development to understand the scientific, social and cultural parts of their activities in the context of the history of national medical tradition.

**Materials and methods:** We will try to consider in general terms the life and professional path of Sofia Okunevska-Morachevska, Sofia Parfanovych, Volodymyra Krushelnytska, highlighting common features and analyzing them in contexts of social, political, and cultural features of the era.

**Conclusions:** Analyzing the biographical milestones and scientific achievements of women physicians in Western Ukraine in the late XIX – early XX century, we concluded that these personalities of Ukrainian medicine can be combined with a number of characteristics, thus demonstrating the continuity and longevity of the national female medical elite in Ukraine.

**KEY WORDS:** Women Physicians, History of Medicine, Okunevska-Morachevska, Parfanovych, Krushelnytska

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### INTRODUCTION

The national history of medicine in the process of its development and the final formation of official versions of the presentation has experienced many upheavals and changes. For a long time, it was only part of the Soviet history of the formation of medical knowledge, where a number of personalities who joined its creation were silenced.

Life stories of Ukrainian women physicians in the late XIX and early XX centuries are multifaceted and very difficult. Throughout their own lives, and sometimes at their cost, they have tried to prove their right to science and practice by breaking a kind of double circle of silence – national – with an unspoken or official taboo on everything “Ukrainian”, and gender – with a ban or, rather, lack of legitimacy for everything “feminine”.

However, it should be noted that the scientific and social activities of Ukrainian women physicians have repeatedly come to the attention of researchers in the history of medicine, in particular, the thorough investigations of I. Bilavych [1-2], J. Hanitkevych [3-5], O. Danyliak deserve attention [6] I. Datsenko [7], Ol. Ohm. Kitseri, Ol. Ol.Kitsery, N. Kitsery [8-9], G. Lavryk [10-11]. At the same time, the fact that in the textbooks and manuals on the history of medicine, courses of lectures and practical classes sufficient attention is paid to the figures of Sofia Okunevska-Morachevska, Sofia Parfanovych and Volodymyra Krushelnytska don't stay unnoticeable. There is

also a lack of comprehensive research on the scientific achievements of women physicians in the late XIX- early XX century, as well as researches that would consider the activities of the latter in the context of social and political life of Ukrainian intellectuals.

In addition to the actual scientific, historical and medical context, it seems indisputable that both a hundred years ago and now the problem of women's realization in science in particular has been and is very acute. Many foreign studies in recent years have stubbornly argued that women do not have a place in science, but at least that it is worth fighting for. In particular, foreign researchers such as Luke Holman and others argue that, in fact, in all fields of science, including medicine, men make up the vast majority, especially at higher levels of scientific activity. This fact seems paradoxical also because in recent years the role of women in science is constantly growing, for example in the so-called STEM-sciences [12]. Similar conclusions are made by other authors [13-18], arguing that there is an increase in the number of women in science over the past 50 years. However, there is a much smaller number of scientific publications by women scientists and the fields of science where they are represented, as well as some negative social attitudes in society responsible for gender discrimination. Moreover, the issue of access to education for women is still relevant, even at the level of primary, secondary and high schools, being one of the greatest social and gender challenges of

our time. In particular, recent UNISEF studies show that approximately 132 million girls are still out of school, and the proportion of girls who do not even receive primary education is about 34.3 million girls [19-20].

It is also important that the modern era, in the context of which we consider the figures of Sofia Okunevska-Morachevska, Sofia Parfanovych, Volodymyra Krushelnytska, was characterized not only by the active growth of the role of women and the search for ways of self-realization, but also by a special interest in the national.

The problem of Ukrainian national identity is one of the key ones in the domestic versions of modernism, it is enough to mention only political attempts to understand and implement the Ukrainian national idea – from the Ukrainian People's Republic to the whole generation of the Shot Renaissance.

Thus, the figures of Sofia Okunevska-Morachevska, Sofia Parfanovych, Volodymyra Krushelnytska deserve detailed consideration and attention for at least three reasons: the formation of adequate coverage of the history of medicine in Ukraine, as well as in terms of gender and national issues.

## THE AIM

The purpose of this article is to identify through the analysis of biographical and scientific Sofia Okunevska-Morachevska, Sofia Parfanovych and Volodymyra Krushelnytska common features of personal and professional development to understand the scientific, social and cultural parts of their activities in the context of the history of national medical tradition.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

We will try to consider in general terms the life and professional path of Sofia Okunevska-Morachevska, Sofia Parfanovych, Volodymyra Krushelnytska, highlighting common features and analyzing them in contexts of social, political, and cultural features of the era.

## REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

Analyzing the biographical milestones and scientific achievements of women physicians in Western Ukraine in the late XIX-early XX century, we concluded that these personalities of Ukrainian medicine can be combined with a number of characteristics, thus demonstrating the continuity and longevity of the national female medical elite.

**Sofia Okunevska-Morachevska**, who started the triad of Ukrainian women physicians of this period, can definitely be considered the first woman physician not only in Western Ukraine, but also the first one in Ukrainian medical history.

Sofia Okunevska-Morachevska was born on May 12, 1865 in a small village near Ternopil in the family of a priest [8]. Despite the ban on education for Ukrainians at the time, she received permission to enter and take exams at the Lviv Academic Gymnasium, which caused a sensation throughout Galicia.

In 1896, Sofia graduated from the University of Zurich, becoming the first female physician in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the first Ukrainian woman in Western Ukraine who got a university education. While studying at the university, Sofia married Polish physician, chemist, scientist and literary critic Vaclav Morachevsky. Sofia Okunevska-Morachevska passed the exams at the Medical Faculty of Lviv University, obtained a doctorate in medicine, nostrified her diploma in Krakow and later started up her own medical practice in Lviv. With a doctorate, she began treatment for cervical cancer with radium according to the method of Marie Skłodowska-Curie, about which she wrote: «There are many such specialists in Germany and Switzerland, and they are not laughed at there, but respected more than a physician who treats with chemicals» [21].

Sofia Okunevska-Morachevska took an active part in the creation of the Ukrainian medical educational space – organized courses for nurses and obstetricians, worked on creating a dictionary of Ukrainian medical terminology [8]. In Gminda and Svatobožice (Austro-Hungarian Empire) she worked as a physician in camps for Ukrainian emigrants. She herself understood that this would erase her further career as a physician and scientist, but even here she remained true to herself, and here she was the first to challenge the Austrian government for its abuse of Ukrainians [8].

She died on February 24, 1926 in hospital from purulent appendicitis complicated by peritonitis.

**Sofia Parfanovych** was born on June 7, 1898 in Lviv, in the family of a railway employee and came from noble Ukrainian family. After graduating from the women's gymnasium, she entered the medical faculty of Lviv University, where she became the first Ukrainian student. Due to the tension of the social and political atmosphere, she emigrated to Prague, where continued her studies. After returning to Ukraine, she graduated Lviv University, and she began working as a physician at Lviv General Hospital as an obstetrician and gynaecologist. Sofia Parfanovych began her first private medical practice in internal medicine and children's diseases in 1927 and put a lot of energy into overcoming prejudice against women physicians.

During these years, her works were actively published in the “Medical Bulletin” – ‘a megaphone’ of scientific achievements of Ukrainian physicians in the early XX century. At the end of World War II, Sofia Parfanovych emigrated to Austria, where she successfully continued practical and scientific work. She was the author of numerous specialized medical works: “Pathology and therapy of pediatric pyothorax”, “Mold (fungus) as a gynecological disease”, “Protein therapy of some women's diseases”, “Detention of the placenta after childbirth”, “Tuberculosis of the female genitals”, “Anesthesia of childbirth”, “Hysterectomy or other treatment”, “First aid and patient care” and others.

An important stage in Sofia Parfanovich's biography was her work at the medical college, where she was the head master. The availability of special education for Ukrainian girls and women remained extremely important for her (until 1939, the Polish authorities banned such education for Ukrainian women). [6, 22].

In 1949 she moved to the USA, received permission to practice medicine. She died in 1968 in Detroit.

**Volodymyra Krushelnytska** is another famous woman physician of Galicia in the early XX century. She was born on January 3, 1903 in Kolomyia in a famous family of public figures of that time. Volodymyra got her primary education in Prykarpattia and continued her studies at the Vienna Gymnasium. In 1919-1925 she was a student of the Medical Faculty of the University of Vienna, after graduating she chose dermatology as her specialty.

Two years later, she returned to Western Ukraine and started up her own practice, while leading an active public life. In 1927, Volodymyra Krushelnytska entered the medical faculty of Lviv University, receiving in 1929 the title of doctor of medicine. In 1930, Volodymyra Krushelnytska moved to Kharkiv and began her research work on the study of sepsis in miners of Donetsk region, and studied the problems of etiology and therapy of lupus erythematosus at the Institute of Venereology and Dermatology [11].

Volodymyra Krushelnytska took an active part in the work of the Ukrainian anti-alcohol society “Renaissance”, where she collaborated with Sofia Parfanovych. She often published educational, scientific and popular articles for women. As G. Lavryk notes, relying on archival materials, conducted classes on the elimination of illiteracy [10].

After the entire Krushelnytsky family moved to Kharkiv, all family members were arrested for political reasons (two brothers were shot, and all other family members were sent to the Solovetsky Special Camp – the largest Soviet concentration camp).

In the camp, she first worked hard on the construction of the White Sea-Baltic Canal, and later as a physician at the camp hospital. Volodymyra was shot dead on December 8, 1937 in Solovki (Russia) [2].

None of the female physicians were just silent women in science or just practitioners. They, it would seem, wanted to be realized as much as possible in the most various spheres of activity – from, actually, clinical medicine and up to educational activities.

All the women physicians we studied were adherents of the idea of national unity, bearers of Ukrainian in science, in particular, in medicine. Their relations with the then political regimes and authorities were not only difficult, but also sometimes tragic. Aiming at the development of Ukrainian medical science, the women we defined were forced, first, at the cost of incredible efforts to obtain a decent – usually European education, and then, roughly speaking, to fight the ‘windmills of power’, trying to implement their knowledge and the results of their own scientific research.

In our opinion, Sofiya Okunevska-Morachevska, Sofiya Parfanovych, Volodymyra Krushelnytska can be called the first women physicians of Ukrainian modernism who managed to break the existing social stereotypes, began to create a new scientific and social reality, changing the world and medicine not with loud phrases, but completely. according to I. Franko “quiet, tireless work”.

## CONCLUSIONS

Analyzing the biographical milestones and scientific achievements of women physicians in Western Ukraine in the late XIX – early XX century, we concluded that these personalities of Ukrainian medicine can be combined with a number of characteristics, thus demonstrating the continuity and longevity of the national female medical elite in Ukraine.

Thus, we can identify the main criteria that combine the common features of the professional development of national physicians in the late XIX- early XX century: professional, scientific, cultural, social and political.

In addition, it is recommended for medical students to add to the study of the course “History of Medicine” the topic “Ukrainian women physicians: from the past to the present”, in particular these figures. Preparation of multimedia research projects on this topic remains relevant as an independent work of students.

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#### **Conflict of interest:**

*The Authors declare no conflict of interest.*

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