

*Articoli/Articles*

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF MEDICINE  
OF UKRAINE AS A SCIENTIFIC-EDUCATIONAL CENTRE

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*SUMMARY*

*The popularity of museums in Ukraine has been growing in recent times. This is due to the socio-economical changes in the country, to the increasing cultural and general educational level of the people, to interest in history and historical memories. Moreover, it is an aspiration for a great number of people to use information with the help of direct contact with their origins. The main idea of the article is to describe the central forms of scientific-research and cultural-educational work at the National Museum of Medicine of Ukraine, its characteristics as a social institution, the influence of medical collections and expositions on the consciousness of people, the analysis of conceptual approaches in the effective work of a museum with a great number of visitors.*

*Introduction*

A museum is an amazing creation of human mentality, a treasure-house of great acquisitions of national documents and spiritual culture. Its mission is helping to analyze contemporary reality through the past, in order to influence both mentality and memory<sup>1</sup>. Historico-medical museums must deal with history as with a page of the cultural history of a country, not simply as the description of scattered medical topics or facts of a doctor's life. In the history of culture the medical museums play a considerable role. Lots of great scientists worked in the field of medicine, and their achievements

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played an important part in its development and left a deep trace in history. This is why the problem of historico-medical museums as our historical and cultural memory, historical and cultural education of the specialists and of the public at large has an important role. At the National Museum of Medicine of Ukraine a great number of persons can see clearly every stage of the historical development, determine its place in the cultural process<sup>2</sup>.

### *The History of Creation*

The Museum of Medicine distinguishes itself among historico-medical museums because of the attention it elicits in different sections of populations in Ukraine, as well as abroad. It was created in November 1982 in honor of the 1500 anniversary of the foundation of the city of Kyiv. The creator of the museum was professor O.A.Grando, MD, Honored Scientist in Ukraine. Nowadays the museum is headed by the Honored Doctor in Ukraine, a senior lecturer of the therapy lectureship in NMAPE named after P.L.Shupic, V.P.Shypulin.

The exposition of the National Museum of Medicine of Ukraine is situated in the architectural memorial of XIX century, the former dissecting room of the Medical Faculty at St. Volodymyr's Kyiv University (now the National University named after T.G.Shevchenko), built in 1853 on the project of a well-known architect, O.V.Beretti, in the style of Russian classicism.

In this building many years ago the medical students of the university were taught, and dissection of corpses took place. A number of famous scientists worked there, who much contributed to anatomy. Among them was the anatomist and physiologist A. de Walther. He was an organizer and the first director of one of the best dissecting rooms at Kyiv University at the time, and the head of the anatomy institute (1853-1868). Walther was a pupil of M.I.Pirogov's; he improved his knowledge in Berlin at J.P.Müller's and Vienna at K.Rokitansky's. His works were devoted to anatomy and physiology<sup>3,4,5</sup>.

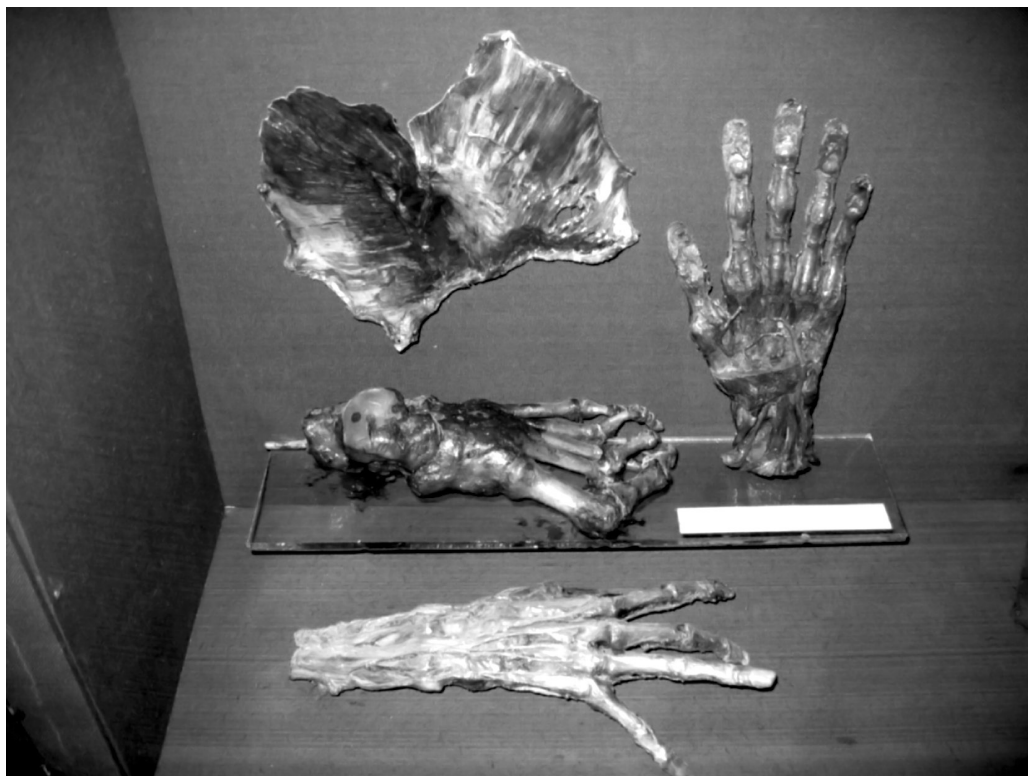


Fig.1 - Preparation from Walther's collection

After A. de Walther, from 1868 till 1890, the lectureship of anatomy was headed by the anatomist, histologist and famous scientist V.A. Bets, who much contributed to the comprehension of central nervous system<sup>6,7</sup>. He was educated abroad at Y.Girtl's, E.W. von Brücke's, K.F.W.Ludwig's and G.Gelmgolts's laboratories. He was the first who systematically searched the development and growth of bones, generalized the results in his monograph "Morphology of osteogenesis" (1887)<sup>8</sup>.

Among the famous scientists who worked in the dissecting room was the founder of the lectureship in general pathology, the histologist physiologist and pathologist N.A.Khrzhonshchevsky. He contributed to research the structure and physiological functions of lungs,

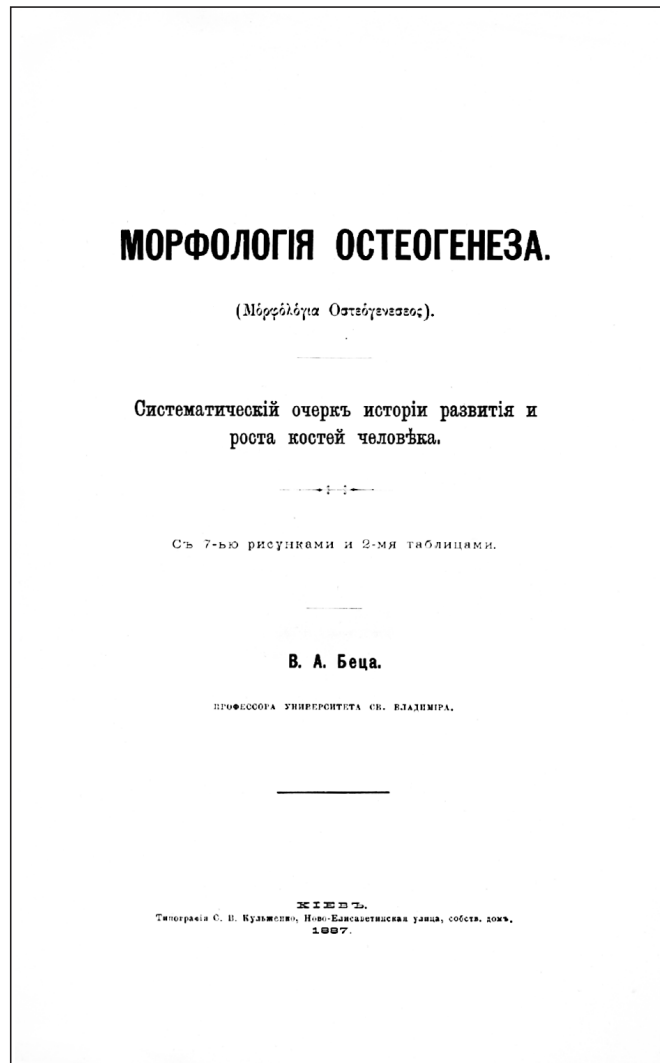


Fig.2 - Monograph of Bets 'Morphology of osteogenesis', 1887

kidneys, liver, skin and nervous system. He worked out a method for coloring blood and lymphatic vessels in a living patient (1864), described in some of his works<sup>9,10</sup>.

M.I.Pirogov, who mainly worked in Ukraine, also played an important role in the development of Kyiv University and created Ukrainian military field surgery.

*National Museum of Medicine of Ukraine*

The history of medicine in Ukraine is thus rich and has many bright and interesting pages. But not all of them are discovered yet; there are a lot of white spots to be filled in. This is why the main task in creating the museum was to exhibit the very importance of the history of medicine, in a full and real way, and thus to stimulate the lively interest of visitors, to influence their feelings and emotions. The objects assembled in the museum were collected in the territory of the whole of Ukraine, as well as abroad; the preparatory work lasted for two decades. Now the fund of the museum has more than 18.000 units, 2.000 of which are on exhibit.

The conception of the museum differed much from the old simple principles, which dominated in the practice of museum studies at the time. The new museum combines traditional forms of exhibition with new architectural and artistic choices, such as audiovisual means of demonstration. It has become possible to make exposition just as persuasive from the point of view of history - and much more interesting. The wide use of technical devices gives the opportunity to control the exposition automatically during the visit and to transform some halls of the museum: the visitors assist to the change of the whole exposition. This, on the one hand, helps to support a high emotional level of the excursion, and on the other hand, entails an enlargement of the emotional space, lack of which is at many museums. One of the halls can be demonstrated twice, and the other – three times.

Thus, on the background of the modern principles of museum studies a new and unique style was created, also praised by the European Association of medical museums (Paris). The very first international congress on the History of medicine took place in Paris in 1982. The Ukrainian delegation was there for the first time. After showing a film about Ukraine, some facts from the history of Ukrainian medicine, our museum of medicine - not well known outside our country at the time - the audience applauded". A highly qualified audience



Fig.3 - Operating room at Medical Faculty of the Kyiv University

was for the first time witnessing information about Ukraine, well-known physicians, the most important scientific discoveries on the screen.

Rich expositional material, natural interiors and dioramas compositions of paintings and sculptors, documental video films, word and



*National Museum of Medicine of Ukraine*



Fig.4 - Hall at the first floor

music combined with original architectural and technical choices, recreate the whole picture of development of medicine in Ukraine.

*I can't find any suitable epithet to express my delight of the National Museum of Medicine of Ukraine. I haven't seen anything like this, though I have visited a lot of museums<sup>11</sup>.*

These words were written by the famous surgeon, writer, cybernetist and founder of the Institute of cardio-vascular surgery Mykola Amosov in a reference book, and they do indeed express the opinion of visitors.

*Serhiy Mykhaylychenko*

The exposition deals with the means and methods of folk medicine in historical order, with the development and improvement of medical aid to people, with scientific activity of famous doctors and scientists of the past, with the process of medical education, creative connections of scientifico-medical schools in Ukraine with Russian and world science.

The medical annals of XX century are widely represented, the heroism of medical workers during World War II is highlighted.

The dramatic events connected with the famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine, Stalin's repressions against doctors and scientists, the Chernobyl tragedy are also illustrated, as well as the development of medicine and the health protection in the new and recent period of our history, especially famous contemporary scientists and the



Fig.5 - Old russian bath





Fig.6 - Medical aid to Kyiv defenders (August 1941)

development of medicine and medical practice in the independent Ukraine.

Thus, highly artistic dioramas and interiors, electronic-automated systems combined with the exhibits of the museum, help to achieve high emotional perception. The exposition is unforgettable for many persons who leave the museum in a good mood and wish to come back again. This success is a great support for the future creative work of the employees of the National Museum of Medicine of Ukraine.

#### *Excursion work*

In the first article of the first part of the Ukrainian Law “*About Museums and Work at Museums*” (26 June 1995) the museums are determined as

*Serhiy Mykhaylychenko*

*cultural-educational and scientific research establishments for studying, keeping and using the memorials of natural, material and spiritual culture, attracting people through the national and world historical and cultural heritage. The main points of the museum work are cultural-educational, scientific research activity, completing the collections, expository, working at funds, publishing, restoration, a work of memory and protection of the heritage*<sup>12</sup>.

The most specific form of work at the National Museum of Medicine of Ukraine is a visit of expositions and exhibitions, as well as the keeping of the open fund. This traditional form organically expresses the specialty of the museum as a social institution and is complemented by a great number of other ways of communication, derived from other scientific, cultural and educational establishments, such as lectures, thematic parties, diverse scientific conferences, medical and educational actions. The importance of this communication in the Ukrainian population is constantly growing and the public activity of the museum as a cultural centre is increasing.

Moreover, the creative use of these forms does not cause erase the specific character of the museum, because in all the cases they are realized on the fund collections basis.

A visit is a multifaceted activity, expressing not only the need for a recreational, shared and intelligent activity in leisure or holiday, but also the possibility of individual harmonic development<sup>13</sup>. Every educational side in this process is integrated with each other: moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, patriotic and international.

A visit is the result of the team-work of an excursion-guide and a group of visitors: their common influence is the main condition for its best effect. An excursion guide must have different approaches to every group of visitors, ability to understand rapidly and to take into account the level of attention, increasing or decreasing, of the whole group or even of the single visitors, because the visits are meant for different groups. The context and kinds of visits depend

on this. They can be considered under different aspects, that determine the aim of the excursion, the choice of the objects and the way of demonstrating. This is why the classification of the excursion is important not only for theory but for practice at the visiting work. The visits differ according to the place of beginning and the objects on display, to thematic character, purpose and the composition of the groups, to their wishes and their previous knowledge of museums<sup>14</sup>. But they all have a common feature – they are built on the same methodical basis.

The essential characteristic of any method is direct contact between the guide and the group that visits the museum. During this contact the educational tasks of the museum are put to a test on the basis of the exposition.

Visual perception, real observation of an object at the museum, directly watching it, plus the effect of events and scenes in the exposition and the sense of excitement they entail, all lie at the basis of the excursion method. Visual perception is forced by moving on definite directions, observation of the object from different sides and distances. Obviously, the verbal commentary has an important role. The material visual methods are the basis of concrete imagination. Collectiveness, characteristics of an excursion, the common purpose, the possibility to give an opinion are also essential factors: the unity of feeling heightens emotional spirit, causing perfect assimilation and perception of things seen and heard.

As to the purpose, the National Museum of Medicine of Ukraine has scientific educational visits for cultural, educational and scientific enrichment. They organize the cultural leisure of different sections of the population. The educational visits have an important role and are meant for senior students of secondary and specialized schools, for students of technical and higher educational establishments, depending on their curriculum to enrich and systematize the educational material or to work at new information. The educational

activity of the National Museum of Medicine of Ukraine enables students and pupils to broaden their vision, is meant to enrich general culture, offers a certain knowledge in the field of the history of medicine and a good opportunity to acquire skills in analyzing the general meaning of events in medical history.

Thematic visits include a number of prominent historical periods (and correspondingly a number of halls discovering the key issues of the exposition), such as *“Origins and Development of Medical Help on the Territory of Ukraine in Ancient Times”* or *“Development of Medical Science in the XIX-XX centuries”*. The cycles of historical development are well expressed on these excursions. If we consider thematic visits of a more specialized subject (a historical period or event), they give a description of the period, one side of historical process, such as the life, and individual or collective activity, e.g. *“Development of Higher Medical Education on the Territory of Ukraine in XIX-XX century”*, *“Zemska Reform in 1864 and Zemska Medicine”*, *“Contribution of Famous Ukrainian Epidemiologists to Native Medicine”*, *“Golodomor 1932-1933 (Famine)”*. On 24 November the memorial event *“Medicine is Weak during Political*



Fig.7 - Famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine

*National Genocide*”, in honour of Golodomor victims, was held in the legendary building of the former dissecting room: among others, famous scientists, politicians and officials took part. The memorial ceremony was taken near the 1993 picture of an Ukrainian artist “*Requiem. To the Golodomor Victims 1932-1933*”.

The memorial candle was lit by the Elder of the Ukrainian medical Society, a surgeon, the former Minister of Health Protection in Ukraine, a corresponding member of the National Academy of Science in Ukraine, and a witness of Golodomor, 91-year old professor V.D.Bratus. After the discussion, it was proposed to create a club for the medical and civil élite the National Museum of Medicine of Ukraine. At its meetings it will be possible to discuss the most recent problems of health protection in Ukraine.

The determination of the subject character, the purpose of the visit and its concrete context depend on the members of the excursion group, on their interest and wishes. There is a problem with language in working with foreign tourists. The native language visits provide direct contact with visitors and give the opportunity to answer the visitors’ questions. 10039 people have visited the National Museum of Medicine of Ukraine since December 2007. Among them are pupils and students (7099), adults (2742) and foreigners (198). The Museum has been visited by guests from near and far countries: Russia, Belarus, the USA, England, Holland, Sweden, Germany, France and Denmark<sup>15</sup>.

#### *Actions and Events*

The museum takes an active part in the educational and entertaining life of Kyiv. The action “*The Night at the Museum*” has been taken this year. The visit was interesting not only for doctors and students of medical schools but also for the ordinary public of Kyiv. The visitors could feel as heroes of the film “*Night at the Museum*”, lighting their way with candle torches. The actors’ play was amazing, adding some





Fig.8 - Chemist's shop (end of 18th century)

figures of doctors in the interiors - first immobile, then becoming alive. The visitors were impressed by the atmosphere of that old time. The tourists were moved attentively watching the operations in old time. Though it was late in the night, a lot of visitors came with their children who were interested in medical instruments of different centuries and in the ancient chemist's shop with plenty of banks with medicine.

On the International Health Day, 8 April, 2008, an action on health information on hypertonia prophylaxis was taken, focused on the joint efforts of family, specialists, and the public to control and avoid factors of risk in cardiovascular diseases, such as smoking, unhealthy food, lack of physical activity, obesity, etc. Cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases are the primary health concerns for the Ukrainian nation.

### *National Museum of Medicine of Ukraine*

A multifaceted connection of public functions is characteristic of the museum. It satisfies the social needs for protection and use of familiar artifacts as elements of historic memory, documental means of public information, carriers of aesthetic values, and means to diffuse the information on the exhibitions.

#### *Scientific and additional activity*

At the National Museum of Medicine of Ukraine the specialists work in the fields of medicine, museum studies, history, philology and engineering. The employees of the museum are well-experienced at practical scientific work; this helps them to work at a high professional level. Every new idea passes through all the stages of its birth before coming into life.

The information regarding the museum is published in the museum editions: catalogues, guide-books, brochures, scientific literature, works based on studying the museum. The National Museum of Medicine of Ukraine as one of the leading institutions of medical profile has published the historico-medical journal “Agapit” since 1994. The journal addresses the problems of Ukrainian medical history from Antiquity to our days, establishing connections between the development of medicine in Ukraine and abroad. Museum studies in the medical sphere are one of the main subjects in the journal.

The scientific and methodical Department and the visits Section fulfill the scientific-research work for visitors – consultations, searching scientific articles, photos, manuscripts, documents - by carrying on work on new acquisitions, so as to enrich the museum and library with new literature, in order to transform and enrich the exposition.

#### *Conclusion*

Thanks to its methods of work the National Museum of Medicine of Ukraine has an important place in the system of museums, because it does not only consider the world experience, but also practices

museum studies at the higher level. According to the Presidential Decree N. 176/99, dated 15 February 1999, the Central Museum of Medicine has become National.

The Museum was also mentioned for its spirituality. On 18 May 2007, on the Museum day, the Museum staff and the Director, the Candidate of Medical Science Vadym Shypulin, were awarded with the Order of St. George, for spiritual renewal in Ukraine, by Decree of the Kyiv Ukrainian-Russian Patriarch Philaretos.

Thus, the main lines of work at the National Museum of Medicine of Ukraine are cultural and educational, as well as scientific. The most specific form of educational work is on visits and visitors, on the expositions and exhibitions, on the public aspects of the funds, achieved in cooperation with scientific and educational establishments.

Today the museum is well-known - not only in Ukraine but abroad - as a scientific, cultural and educational centre, where the memories of the past and present are kept.

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*Serhiy Mykhaylychenko*

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