

The Moscow Physics and Medical Society's activities in the second half of the 19th century

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The first scientific medical society – the Society for the Medical and Physical Sciences Competition – was created in 1804 at the Medical Faculty of the Imperial Moscow University. From 1845 it became known as the Moscow Physics and Medical Society. Major scientific schools were created in the second half of the 19th century in Russia. They were headed by scientists who were active members of the Physics and Medical Society. At this time, a tradition evolved at the university of combining academic and scientific spheres of activity, as well as the use of scientific techniques that were discovered in medical practice.

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The first scientific medical society in Russia – the Society for the Medical and Physical Sciences Competition – was established in 1804 at the Imperial Moscow University. [1] From 1845, it became known as the Moscow Physics and Medical Society, which existed until 1917. In the second half of the 19th century there was an active process of specialization, differentiation of sciences, and scientific schools formed, headed by leading scientists and active members of the "physics and medical society." A tradition evolved of combining academic and scientific activities, as well as the use of scientific methods and discoveries in medical practice.

The second half of the 19th century was a difficult period in the history of the country: wars, epidemics and governmental reforms touched all spheres of Russian society, including university education. During this time, new societies encompassing certain branches of medicine appeared and as a result the influence of the Physics and Medical Society and its members began to decrease. Nonetheless, in analyzing the work of the society we can speak of the revitalization of its members' work, especially in terms of the introduction of theoretical research into medical practice.

In 1848, Alexander Egorevich Evenius was elected president of the society. He remained

in office for almost 20 years (until 1867). From 1828, he was a member of the Society for the Medical and Physical Sciences Competition. By 1848, the society had about 100 members. On April 20, 1847, Evenius published the first issue of the society's periodical – The Moscow Medical Journal – which he edited until 1850. The magazine was published until 1858. From 1851, the chief editor was Professor A. I. Polunin. [2, c. 149] In the preface to the fifth volume (from which point the magazine came under his editorship), Polunin wrote that the main goal of The Moscow Medical Journal was to promote health knowledge in Russia and its area of focus was "academic and practical." Most of the articles published in the journal, the authors of which included F. I. Inozemtsev, V. A. Basov, A. I. Over, I. V. Varvinsky, L. S. Sevruk, G. A. Zakharin and many others, were originally presented at the meetings of the Physics and Medical Society. Polunin was not only the editor and publisher of the magazine, but also one of its most active contributors. He published a large number of articles, reports, lectures, speeches, reviews, essays and obituaries in the magazine, many of which received great public interest. The materials published gave the publication a special cachet with the leading body of Russian physicians of the time. For example, Zakharin published a number of bibliographic reviews and two original works ("The mutual relation of urine protein and pregnant fits" and "The doctrine of postpartum diseases").

Meetings were held once a month and took the form of conferences covering not only theoretical but also practical medicine. At the society's meetings during 1850-1860, its members constantly reported on the common diseases of that period (vice-president of the society K. G. Bunge "On renal stone disease"; N. B. Anke "On diphtheritic angina"; Basov "On iliac fat hernia"; F. F. Graf "On the plague," and "An example of overly developed sensitivity in childhood" and others). At a meeting in 1860, Zakharin reported on a tracheotomy procedure. [3, p. 20] Hospital doctors reported on patients and the special circumstances they encountered in hospital and in urban practice (I. V. Varvinsky "Observations of typhoid patients," and "Treatment of epidemic cholera"; S. I. Klimenkov "On the treatment of cholera with bloodletting and large doses of opium tincture"; P. P. Klyuchnikov "On hemoptysis and the subsequent pulmonary phthisis in grinder operators with a proposal for measures to address the causes of the disease in this occupation" and others).

Some of the members of the society demonstrated anatomical and pathological specimens from rare occurrences of diseases, or pictures of them, new apparatuses and more. (F. M. Belyavsky demonstrated galvanic electric apparatuses, K. A. Kraft – new drugs, I. M. Sokolov – anatomical and pathological specimens and drawings, Polunin – pathological specimens). Many gave presentations on various medical topics (Zakharin "Is sugar produced in the liver"; V. I. Besser "On the application of electromagnetism in therapy", and others.) Articles from foreign journals were analyzed (Polunin "On the state of medicine in Paris") and more.

The society president, Evenius, actively presented reports at the society's meetings ("On random necrosis of legs," "On some operations: removal of tumors of the jaw area and the breast"; "On gunshot wounds"; "On emergence of pus from the abdomen through the navel"; "The extraction of strangulated hernia via an operation, in spite of a perforation of the intestine"; "On cutaneous cancer"; "On the inflammation of the hip joint of the pelvis"; "On rupture of the spleen, in one case, as a result of intermittent fever" and others).

The society's actives noticeably increased from the late 1840s – after the cholera epidemic

in Moscow. Evenius, in particular, spoke at a meeting of the society and presented statistical tables of the results of treatment of cholera and other acute illnesses at the City Hospital. (During the cholera epidemic in Moscow and its surrounding province in 1847 and 1848, he headed the cholera department at the City Hospital, where 1,500 people were treated.) The question of contagiousness of cholera and how it spread was very relevant. One of the younger members of the society at the time – the society's secretary Professor Polunin – presented some results of postmortem studies of cholera victims. In December 1849, professor of pathological anatomy Polunin, who distinguished himself with his active public temperament and exceptional work ethic, was elected secretary of the Physics and Medical Society for internal communications and for almost 10 years (until January 26, 1859) carried out this role.

Analysis of the society's proceedings from those years shows that Polunin never missed a meeting of the society. According to one of the leaders and the biographer of the Physics and Medical Society, D. I. Zernova, he made more than 70 presentations and demonstrations at these meetings. Their titles give an insight into a versatile, multi-faceted activities that Polunin conducted at the Physics and Medical Society during these years. For example, he gave the keynote speeches at the annual public meetings of the society – "On the relationship of medicine to the natural sciences, on the fields of modern medicine and the purpose and objectives of the Moscow Physics and Medical Society" (1851), "The relationship of anatomy, physiology, pathology and medical practice" (1853), "On treatment methods that have been proposed at various times, and the struggle between modern empiricist doctors and rational physicians" (1854), "A few words about the healing power of nature" (1855) and others. As a student of the famous K. Rokitansky and a staunch supporter of rational medicine, he promoted his views on modern medicine, choosing the Physics and Medical Society as a platform for his campaign.

In the late 1850s, a struggle between two new directions in medicine emerged thanks to the success of natural and fundamental medical sciences – empirical and rational medicine. One

of the most important, which generated lively debate in the society, was the question of the impact of smallpox vaccination on the course of syphilis (it arose in the late 1850s to early 1860s). The initiator of this discussion was Zakharin. Four emergency meetings of the society were held, which sparked unprecedented interest from the medical community. The presentations were made by both Muscovite and non-Muscovite doctors. As can be seen from the proceedings from 1860 and 1861, the commission came to the conclusion that the vaccination was unsuitable for the treatment of syphilis. This society concurred with this conclusion. Another issue that arose in the early 1860s concerned the relationship of relapsing fever, typhus and typhoid, and what form of the disease "betrayed" Russian doctors under the term "febris thyphoidea." Zakharin and Y. S. Kremyansky gave reports on this issue at the society's meetings during the 1865-1866 period.

An important stage in the history of Physics and Medical Society in the second half of 19th century was the adoption in 1866 of a constitution (a special commission was established for the preparation of the new draft of the constitution, to which Zakharin was elected a member). Particularly noteworthy was § 2, which states the purpose and subjects of the society's activities. "The purpose of the society is: a) to support efforts in the natural sciences in general and health in particular; b) to maintain constant communication and exchange of information, opinions and judgments on subjects related to the field of natural and medical sciences among the members of the society; and c) to gather and disseminate the aforesaid information among doctors in general." [4, p. 3]

In general, the scientific activity of the society in the 1850-1860 period reflects issues that were of concern to the medical world at this time. It was very important that the scientific discoveries were introduced into practice. A big role in this was played by the Physics and Medical Society, headed by Evenius, who remained its president until the end of 1867. In his place Polunin (who was in office from 1867-1870) was elected.

Polunin assumed his responsibilities as president of the society on January 16, 1867, and gave a speech "On the tasks and the nature of the work of scientists and medical societies," which

reiterated the idea of the scientific community as a community of doctors of different specializations, providing for the elimination of the one-sidedness inherent in specializations, and more widely raise questions to fully resolve them. He stressed the need to popularize scientific knowledge in order to improve the overall cultural level of the Russian people. In 1870, Polunin was elected an honorary member of the Physics and Medical Society.

In 1870, the outstanding physician Professor Zakharin was elected chairman of the society. [5] Upon taking the position, he made a 3,000 ruble cash contribution to the society "under the condition that the interest from the society's capital be used for the publication of a newspaper or magazine." With these funds, a weekly newspaper, the Moscow Medical Bulletin, was published and once again the society's "Works" began to be published. As can be seen from the proceedings of the meetings of the society, Zakharin presented papers in the 1870s, which attracted the attention of many researchers and practitioners ("Evasive action of leech bloodletting"; "A case of syphilitic pneumonia"; "On cold neuritis among other rheumatic diseases"; "Calomel for hypertrophic cirrhosis of the liver and in therapy in general"; "Lues heart from a clinical perspective"; "On bloodletting"; "On the treatment of consumption by Koch's means" and others).

From 1872, for 12 years (until 1884) the permanent chairman of the Physics and Medical Society was N. A. Tolsky – the founder of the department of pediatrics, honorable ordinary professor of the Imperial Moscow University and founder of the Moscow School of pediatricians. Tolsky prolifically and fruitfully engaged in scientific and educational work and for 20 years took part in the Physics and Medical Society. [6, p. 40 - 47] In April 1862, he was unanimously elected as a full member of the society and in October 1865 he became the society's secretary for internal affairs. Tolsky actively took part in meetings, presenting scientific reports and abstracts. His critical reviews of recent literature often caused a lively discussion.

As head of the society, Tolsky made great efforts in organizing the meetings and selecting the speakers. He strove to ensure that the society "was at the height of service to science, and that science is disseminated to physicians" and largely

contributed to the popularization of science, and the dissemination of scientific knowledge. He was the editor of the "Moscow Medical Gazette," which had been published since 1873. His numerous presentations at the society's meetings and their publication indicate the breadth of his scholarship and interest in various medical issues. Most of Tolsky's reports and presentations were devoted to pediatrics. Among them were a presentation on interesting cases of obstetric practice (on the birth conjoined twins in the obstetric clinic, on a cesarean section with a favorable outcome for the baby, and so on); the results of treatment of childhood diseases; the pathogenesis of the "English disease" (rickets); hereditary syphilis; on his monitoring of the epidemic spread of lobar pneumonia in children, and more. Not only did he himself present such reports, but was also actively involved in the presentations of young doctors, supporting them, providing an opportunity them to prove themselves. For example, in Russia the first operation to create a gastrostomy for a patient took place in 1877 and was conducted by V. F. Snegiryov. A report on this event was presented at a meeting of the Moscow Physics and Medical Society on March 7, 1877. [7, p. 8; 8, p. 93]

The development of bacteriology and serotherapy was demonstrated in a number of original reports presented at the meetings of Physics and Medical Society from 1870 (A. I. Voitov, V. V. Voronin, M. A. Tikhomirov, N. N. Esaulov, K. F. Flerov, V. F. Polyakov, M. Y. Gurevich and A. K. Bauer).

As was previously the case, members of the society quickly responded in providing practical help in fighting various diseases. Thus, when cases of trichinosis appeared in Moscow in 1874, the society's members called an emergency meeting and reviewed a number of reports. In order to determine the source of disease and how far the disease has spread in Moscow, all the city's doctors who knew anything about trichinosis and its outbreak were invited to the society's meeting. As a result of the joint efforts, the source of the disease was identified and preventive measures were developed that were recommended to the city's population and urban services.

In 1874, the society's activities intensified and an emergency meeting was held, when

plague broke out in the village of Vetlyanskoi on the Volga. It was essential to develop measures in the event that the epidemic spread and give instruction to some members of the society, who, at the invitation of the government, were sent to the place where the epidemic originated.

Gynecological surgery generated great interest among members of the society. From 1879, for more than 20 years the records of the meetings' proceedings reveal numerous reports in this specialization, which often generated a lively discussion. There is also evidence that there was a "particularly hot debate concerning hysterectomy, which is why in 1883 a special commission was created to develop the indications for this operation." [9, p. 29]

The society paid close attention to public hygiene from 1870 to 1880, when projects were created to increase water supplies to Moscow and construct canalization. Erisman took an active role in this field.

The proceedings of the Physics and Medical Society from January 26, 1881, include the annual report on the activities of the society during 1880 (illustration). It shows that in 1880, 13 meetings were held and 28 presentations were made. Thus, chairman Tolsky presented a paper "On intermittent fever in children", Zernov – "The role of the elastic forces of the ribcage in the mechanism of breathing", V. S. Bogoslavsky – "On the Caucasian mineral waters. A description of their history and value, among the other waters of Europe." A patient was presented who suffered from a herpes zoster rash, and shared his opinions on the "nervous nature" of his suffering. A. N. Maklakov presented "On artificial light," V. M. Ostrograzov presented "On diphtheria in Moscow for the last 2 1/2 years," V. V. Chirkov gave a report on three cases of "saccharine disease among one family's members." [10, p. 4-5]

The society's decisions in respect of significant dates in the history of Russia is of great interest. For example, the society participated in the opening ceremony of the monument to Pushkin (created by sculptor A. Opekushin). The delegates from the society were I. A. Zaborovsky, I. N. Pushchin and V. D. Shervinsky. The unveiling of the monument took place in 1880, on the day of poet's birth.

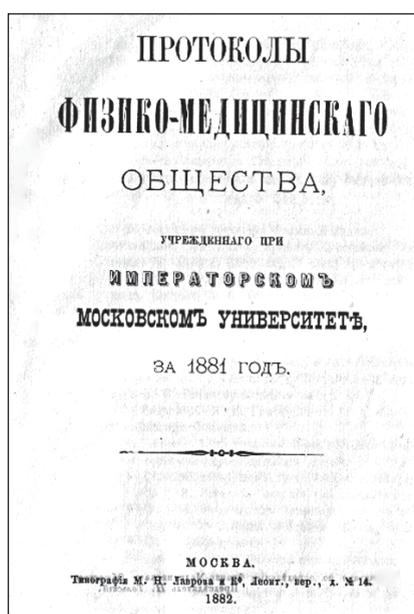
The jubilee of N. I. Pirogov was also marked. "On the occasion of the 50th anniversary

of scientific, literary and administrative work by honorary member N. I. Pirogov, the society has decided to send a telegram and establish an award named after this hero of the day for the best essay in the field of medicine. For considering this issue, concerning the sums and topics, the society elected a commission, composed of the chairman (Tolsky) and members of the society – A. Y. Kozhevnikov and A. A. Ostroumov. [10, p. 6] In the proceedings of the third ordinary meeting of the Physics and Medical Society, which was held on March 16, 1881, Tolsky reported that the commission proposed to the society the following topics:

"The biography of N. I. Pirogov and a critical assessment of its value in medicine." The society decided to approve this topic. [10, p. 23]

Information about the death of Pirogov can be found in the minutes of the ninth regular meeting of the Physics and Medical Society, which was held on November 30, 1881. The society's chairman reported that "on November 23 of this year, the society, science, the fatherland and humanity suffered the loss of the society's honorary member Nikolai Ivanovich Pirogov and said on this occasion some deeply felt words about the high merits of the deceased, as a scientist, citizen and person." [10, 51] The value of the prize for the best essay in honor of Pirogov is mentioned in the proceedings of the 11th extraordinary meeting Physics and Medical Society, held on December 21, 1881: "The size of the prize has been set at 500 silver rubles." [10, p. 58] Deadline for submission of essays was January 1, 1883. However, the competition did not receive even one submission.

A significant problem that the society was fully occupied in dealing with was the introduction of antiseptics in surgery and gynecology. In 1883, the society under the editorship of secretary V. A. Dobronravov published a brochure for midwives, in which the rules of aseptics and



Collection of minutes of meetings of Physics and Medical Society for 1881.

antiseptics were described. The knowledge of these rules made it possible to avoid postnatal diseases.

In 1885, Professor Dmitry Nikolaevich Zernov (1843-1917) was elected chairman of the Physics and Medical Society. From 1869-1916 he headed the department of normal anatomy at the Imperial Moscow University. A wonderful teacher and organizer, he perfected the learning process, expanded and added new specimens to the anatomical museum. An outstanding scholar Zernov wrote the three-volume "Handbook of Descriptive Anatomy" in 1891 which was published 14 times and for half a century served as a textbook

for medical students.

Zernov was an active member of the Physics and Medical Society – in the period from 1871-1878 he was the secretary, in 1879-1884 he was vice-chairman, and from 1885 until his death he was the society's chairman. Zernov's scientific school of thought was known for classical works of the individual variability of the sulci and gyri parts of the brain. At the time numerous foreign pathologists argued that an eminent man stood out due to his large brain mass and a more complex form of gyrus. Zernov produced the work "On the anatomy of the brain of intelligent people" (1889) and refuted this view. In 1889, he proposed the encephalometer – the first device for conducting anatomical studies and surgical operations on the human brain. It must be stressed that Zernov's scientific discoveries and developments, like those of all members of the Physics and Medical Society, were reported at the meetings, as recorded in the records of the society over many years. So, based on a large volume of comparative anatomical material, Zernov proved the scientific bankruptcy of the theory of Italian psychiatrist and criminologist C. Lombroso about innate criminality. In the commencement address "A critical essay on the anatomical bases of Lombroso's criminal theory" (1896) he showed

that there was no direct relationship between the structure of the skull and the "tendency to commit crime."

Due to the progress made in science and technology, the discovery of anesthesia, antiseptics and aseptics, clinical surgery took a leading role in the second half of the 19th century. The society's activities included scientific discoveries that were implemented in practical surgery. For example, in the late 1860s to early 1870s, Moscow hospitals suffered an "outbreak of epidemic hospital gangrene so serious that it led surgeons to despair; they were almost reluctant to operate, and if they operated, they used dressings such as manganese-potassium potash." [9. 31] Physics and Medical Society member S. I. Kostarev believed that the best way of healing of surgical wounds was to leave them open, to try and form a scab. He called his method the method of wound aeration.

Another discovery in the field of disinfection was reported in 1886 by the society's full member Voitov. During an investigation of the influence of various substances on the life of bacteria, he was convinced that "formic acid is very effective, even the best of all bactericides that act via a chemical means." The results of this research were published, but were not widely put into practice. After seven years, "formalin was discovered, i.e. a substance derived from formic acid (formaldehyde), which is currently preferred to all other disinfectant substances." [9. 32]

Back in the late 1860s laparotomy began to be used in surgery for therapeutic purposes. A number of interesting reports about this operation were given at meetings of the society. Among those who spoke on the subject were I. G. Savostitsky (1869), A. N. Soloviev (1885, 1890) and N. A. Varnek (1890, March, October). In 1897, Professor Snegiryov gave a report "about 120 myohysterectomies, and in 1899 he reported on a thousand laparotomy operations and the conclusions which he could make with such a huge amount of observation materials." [8, p. 28]

The problems of ophthalmology and laryngology were also discussed at the society's meetings in the 1880–1890s. Presentations were made by the society's full members Maklakov, S. N. Lozhechnikov, K. L. Adelgeim, E. N. Malutin and others. In 1885, a report on ophthalmology was given by Maklakov (on the invention of a device to determine the intraocular

pressure – the ophthalmotonometer). Malutin gave numerous reports over a number of years on laryngology. He informed the society's members about the method he developed to fix voices using tuning forks and the influence of the shape of the hard palate on voice quality (minutes 1896, 1898 and 1902).

Due to the fact that tuberculosis and the fight against it in the 1890s remained a serious problem, meetings of the Physics and Medical Society heard numerous reports, including from Professor Zakharyin, on experiments with the use of tuberculin, the results of which led to conclusions being drawn on this method of treatment of tuberculosis.

In 1897, Professor Zakharin died. At a meeting of the society many members spoke of their memories of the man. [11] Snegiryov gave a speech "In memory of G. A. Zakharyin," Zernov – "Gregory Antonovich Zakharyin's relationship with the Physics and Medical Society." These speeches were published in the Proceedings of the Physics and Medical Society. [12, p. 56-63, 49-56]

The end of the 1890s was a time of active political, economic and scientific life in the history of Russia and the history of the Medical Faculty of the Imperial Moscow University. The society's members were active in their scientific and social work. By 1897 the construction of a unique educational and medical research center was completed in Moscow at Devichye Pole. [13]

Professor N. V. Sklifosovsky, Erisman, A. I. Makeev, V. F. Snegiryov, A. Y. Kozhevnikov, I. F. Klein and others were directly involved in the preparation of the plans for the clinic. On August 3, 1897, at the opening of the monument to Pirogov in the "Clinical Town," President Zernov made a welcoming speech on behalf of the Physics and Medical Society.

On August 7, 1897, the 12th International Congress of Physicians opened at Moscow's Bolshoi Theater. The event was attended by 7,500 people and around 1,000 presentations were given. The chairman of the Organizing Committee of the 12th International Congress of Physicians was Professor Sklifosovsky, a member of the Physics and Medical Society. In his welcoming speech he said that "Russian scientists are no longer students, but equal citizens of Europe." Foreign scholars

in their speeches praised the town and clinical research activities of the Russian specialists.

In 1904, the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Physics and Medical Society was discussed at several meetings of the society under Zernov's chairmanship. In the proceedings of the meeting on April 15, 1904, the commission for organizing the anniversary celebrations was approved, it included Zernov, N. I. Nikolsky, N. F. Gagman, M. M. Gardner, P. I. Karuzin, Flerov, O. A. Alexandrov and P. M. Revidtsov. [14, p. 37] At the same meeting it was decided to establish a Physics and Medical Society prize, which was to be awarded every four years for work on medical subjects. On May 5, 1904, the "plan for a prize for independent research in the physical and medical sciences" was unveiled, according to which it was proposed "to establish a prize consisting of one thousand rubles (1,000 rubles) to be issued every three years." [14, p. 40]

One of the main issues considered at the meeting of the society on May 5, 1904, was the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Physics and Medical Society of the Imperial Moscow University. Zernov said that in order to celebrate the 100th anniversary a permit from the minister of national education would need to be obtained, and for this it was necessary to specify the planned date and the anticipated program for the celebration.

The commission had earlier decided to hold the celebration on September 27, 1904. According to the minutes of the meeting, after a discussion, the commission "developed the following program:

The celebration was to begin on the eve of the anniversary, i.e. September 26, 1904, with an all-night vigil in the university church.

On the day of the anniversary, after the

solemn liturgy in the university church, there was to be a memorial service for Emperor Alexander I, the trustee (at the time) of the university M. N. Muravev and deceased members of the society.

At the end of the church service, the participants will go to the assembly hall for the joint meeting of the University Council and the Physics and Medical Society, where a speech will be given." [14, p. 39] At this solemn meeting, Chairman Zernov gave a lecture on "A historical overview of the society's one hundred years of existence." Some other members of the society also provided recollections. Greetings were read by delegates of other learned societies in which they praised the Physics and Medical Society.

Thus the first scientific society, which arose in 1804 at the Imperial Moscow University, played a major role in the development of medical research concepts, as well as in the implementation of scientific discoveries into practice in the field of domestic medicine. In the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the natural sciences – physics, chemistry and biology – had a significant influence on health care. The best scientific schools of Russia were formed at the Faculty of Medicine. They were led by researchers who were active members of many scientific societies (the Moscow Surgical Society, the Moscow Therapeutic Society, the Society of Neurologists of the Medical Faculty, the Obstetrical and Gynecological Society, the Moscow Society of Pediatricians and others [15. 42 – 47]), including the Physics and Medical Society: A. I. Babukhin, A. A. Bobrov, Zakharin, Zernov, Kozhevnikov, Polunin, Sechenov, Sklifosovsky, Snegiryov, N. F. Filatov, Erisman and others.

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