

Polish neuropsychiatrists in Russian empire

B. Lichterman

Medical History, Russian History and Cultural Studies, The Sechenov University, Russia

After Poland was divided between Austria, Prussia and Russia in the end of 18th century many Polish physicians lived and worked in Russian Empire. For example, Jan (Ivan) Mierzejewski (1838-1908) was a professor of psychiatry and nervous diseases of Imperial Medico-surgical (later Military medical) Academy in St.Petersburg (1877-1893), chairman of St. Petersburg society of psychiatrists and First Congress of Russian psychiatrists. His illustrious pupils include Vladimir Bekhterev, Leonid Blumenau and Alexander Shcherbak (1863-1934). The latter was elected to the chair of nervous and mental diseases at Warsaw University. In 1911 he moved to Sebastopol and founded Romanovsky (later the IM Sechenov) Institute for Physical Therapy. My grandfather Boleslav Likhterman (1902-1967) was one of his pupils. My grandfather's uncle Dr. Maurycy (Moriz) Urstein (1872-1940) from Warsaw authored more than 100 publications on psychiatry and neurology. He was a pupil of Emil Kraepelin in Germany. In Russian-Japanese war in 1904-1905 he was a military doctor in Russian Army. In WW1 he was a director of Russian Red Cross hospital and studied mental disorders after brain injuries. Neurology of brain and spinal cord injuries was also a subject of interest of professor Władysław (Vladimir) Dzierżyński (1881-1942) who studied and worked in Russia until his emigration to Poland in 1922. He authored a first Polish textbook on neurology. To conclude, physicians of Polish origin made significant contributions to Russian and international neurology and psychiatry.