

Abstract

Diabetes has been a known disease since ancient times. For a very long time, it was perceived as a deadly disease. The mechanisms of the disease formation as well as effective ways of treatment were unknown. It was not until the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries that a breakthrough occurred in the diagnosis and treatment of diabetes. This was mainly due to the discovery of the organ related to the disease and the organic substance - insulin, which regulates blood sugar levels.

Among the centers dealing with the diagnosis and treatment of diabetes in the interwar period in Poland were the internal medicine clinics of the Stefan Batory University in Vilnius: the Clinic of General Diagnostics and Therapy and the Clinic of Detailed Pathology and Therapy of Internal Diseases. In 1934, they were merged into the Department of Internal Medicine, headed by Professor Aleksander Januszkiewicz.

The diagnosis and treatment of diseases in these centers were carried out according to a clinical examination plan. The diagnosis of diabetes in the interwar period was based mainly on characteristic symptoms observed in this disease as well as laboratory tests: urine and blood. The main method of treating patients was diet, which in the case of diabetes had many different, often contradictory, variations. Despite the discovery of insulin and knowledge of its therapeutic action, its use was treated very skeptically, especially in the first years after its invention. It was believed that the use of insulin was only a supplement to dietary treatment and could not be replaced or made unnecessary. An extremely important aspect in the treatment of diabetes was an individual approach to each patient.

The activity of medical personnel of the internal medicine clinics in Vilnius, manifested in the development of medical practice, scientific activity, and popularization of knowledge, had a significant contribution to combating diabetes in Poland. These actions influenced the facilitation of access to health care, the development of individual medical specialties, and the increase of low public awareness. This resulted in an increase in disease detectability and rapid implementation of treatment.

This thesis has a historical character. The method of source analysis, comparative and statistical research was applied in this thesis. The analysis primarily focused on previously unprocessed source materials, relating to the investigated issue, located in the resources of the Main Medical Library of Stanisław Konopka and including the Department of Old Medical Books in Warsaw, as well as digital library resources.

Keywords:

- Diabetes,
- Insulin,
- Diet,
- Aleksander Januskiewicz,
- Department of Internal Medicine, Stefan Batory University in Vilnius.