



## More about Mikulicz

**To the Editor:** I was astonished to read Dr Ekkehard Schaffner's letter on Jan Mikulicz-Radecki and 'my' response to it.<sup>2</sup> Firstly, Dr Schaffner's letter was significantly altered and modified in the editorial process. A number of points as well as Dr Schaffner's anger and sarcasm were edited out, thereby profoundly changing the personal and emotional character of the letter. Secondly, none of the statements presented after 'Jarek Kowalczyk replies' were included in my original response to Dr Schaffner's letter. We are all human beings, largely imperfect and making mistakes. I would therefore like to quote some fragments of my reply to Dr Schaffner's letter, which had been sent to me by the *SAMJ* for comment.

... The last 250 years of central European history were very difficult and confusing. Between 1750 and 1945 the names and borders of many countries and towns have changed at least 6 times. With regard to Poland, the country was divided between the Austrian Empire, Prussia (present Germany) and Russia 3 times: 1772, 1793, 1795 (the Partition of Poland). ... During the time of Professor Mikulicz-Radecki's life and medical activity, Poland indeed did not exist as an independent state on the European map. However, even during that period of history Poland retained a sense of national identity. Polish culture and education were present and the language was widely spoken. In 1815 Poland was recreated in the form of a semi-independent state and subsequently its borders were changed after World Wars I and II. Those historical events changed the names of districts, provinces, towns, streets and even buildings. Many adjustments were made to educational programmes, maps and historical data, most merely for political and propaganda purposes. Many archives were destroyed and records were adjusted to support a new history. ...

'My article<sup>3</sup> about Mikulicz-Radecki was based on Polish sources and I therefore used the Polish names of towns. Chernivtsi, in the Bukowina region of what is now Ukraine, carries various spellings, such as Czernowitz, Cernauti, Czerniowce, Cernovcy, Tschernowitz, Cernivci, etc., depending on which country (Soviet Union, Turkey, Romania, etc.) it belonged to. ... Contemporary maps of Europe available in South Africa use the name Chernivtsi. This shows again how confusing this sensitive and delicate issue is in view of the recent political changes in European history. What is now Wroclaw, a town located in the southern part of Poland (formerly Poland, Lower Silesia or Prussia), was initially called Vratislavia, renamed Breslau, and changed its name to Wroclaw. ...

I do admit that I should have used the names of towns and regions of the 19th century as they were during Mikulicz-Radecki's life, or double names, to avoid confusion.

'To bring this problem closer to South African readers, for example, in 2050 which name is going to be absolutely correct in literature: Transvaal or Gauteng? Pietersburg or Polokwane?

'In the Polish bibliography Mikulicz-Radecki's first name is Jan. In the world literature the names Johann and Johannes are also used. The *Encyclopedia Britannica*, quoted by Dr Schaffner, states clearly that Mikulicz-Radecki was a Pole: "Mikulicz-Radecki, Johann, von — Polish surgeon, born . . . in Czernowitz, Austria . . ."! . . . The German aristocratic title "von" was a recognition and conversion of Mikulicz-Radecki's Polish aristocratic status by the Emperor of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1898 and by the King of Germany and Prussia in 1899. . . .

'With regard to Mikulicz-Radecki being declined a post at the prestigious Berlin and Vienna Universities as stated in my article (I stress: not in Germany), the Polish bibliography indicates that his Polish origin and culture were the major drawbacks.

'I do not intend to comment on the matter of the "occupation" of . . . Breslau (Wroclaw) by Russia and Poland after 1945. The borders of Germany, Soviet Union and Poland are the result of the Potsdam Conference in 1945 and post-war settlement in Europe. This fact must simply be accepted. The German territorial claims and validity of names of districts and towns were finally put to rest by an agreement between Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany in 1972. The remark about the resettlement of the German residents from Lower Silesia seems to be a political and personal issue for Dr Schaffner. I feel that it has nothing to do with the medical career of Professor Jan Mikulicz-Radecki. . . .

'In conclusion, I would like to stress again that the purpose of my letter about this great pioneer of modern surgery was to present his medical achievements to my colleagues and not to "bend" (word used by Dr Schaffner) the historical facts of Mikulicz-Radecki's life and the times he lived in. I hope that I explained some simplifications and my adherence to the Polish bibliography only. I do apologise to Dr Schaffner and your readers for that. I thank the *SAMJ* for giving me the opportunity to respond to Dr Schaffner's letter.'

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2. Kowalczyk J. Jan Mikulicz-Radecki — father of surgical endoscopy (Reply to letter). *S Afr Med J* 2004; **94**: 242.
3. Kowalczyk J. Jan Mikulicz-Radecki — father of surgical endoscopy. *S Afr Med J* 2003; **93**: 509-510.

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The correspondence columns are an important feature of the SAMJ. Letters are often shortened and, as with all text received, subject to sub-editing to make them more reader-friendly. In the correspondence concerning Mikulicz-Radecki, we erred in inadvertently printing an explanatory covering letter to the Editor and not the correct response, hence the author's correction. — Ed.

**To the Editor:** The article by J Kowalczyk on the biography of Professor Jan Mikulicz-Radecki<sup>1</sup> made us analyse this subject and we decided to compare it with our knowledge. In the years 1882 - 1887 Mikulicz-Radecki became a Director and Professor of Surgery at Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland. In 1887 he became Director of the Clinic and Professor of Surgery in Königsberg and afterwards in Wrocław (Breslau). Presumably Jan Mikulicz-Radecki belonged to both cultures and nationalities: he was Polish by family origin and native language, and German by his study and work in Vienna, Königsberg and Wrocław, as well as by his marriage to Henrietta Pacher.

Mikulicz-Radecki was of course a famous surgeon, but we would like to remind readers of his contribution to the development of otorhinolaryngology. One of this earliest articles was on scleroma and epidermoid cyst — one of the first descriptions of cholesteatoma.<sup>2</sup> In 1883 Mikulicz-Radecki gave a method of radical resection of the tonsil carcinoma by lateral pharyngotomy. He had led the section of the neck along the margin of the sternocleidomastoid muscle, and subsequently

cut chewing muscles and resected the mandible body. In this way he exposed the lateral wall of the pharynx and the whole operation was done without opening the oral cavity and pharynx.<sup>3</sup> In 1886 he was the first to open the maxillary sinus from the medial nasal meatus and to evacuate empyema from the maxillary sinus. During his work in Kraków and Wrocław he constructed the skolizoymeter and more frequently used Mikulicz's compressorium and devices for intrathoracic operations. He was the first to undertake an operation in a large hypobaric chamber on a patient with neoplasm of the upper part of the oesophagus.<sup>4</sup> He published several articles on the aseptics of surgical procedures and was a devotee of iodoform usage. In 1892 Mikulicz-Radecki published work in which he paid attention to disease with symmetrical, bilateral oedema and enlargement of the salivary and lacrimal glands, and to microscopic examination of lymphocyte infiltrations. Later works described these symptoms as Mikulicz-Radecki syndrome. In 1893 in Wrocław Mikulicz-Radecki implanted a glass faser wick from the ventricle through the subarachnoid space to the galea, which was simultaneously the first ventriculostomy and the first extrathecal shunt.<sup>5</sup>

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3. Mikulicz J. Przyczynek do techniki operacyjnej i następnego leczenia raka migdałków. *Przeg Lek* 1883; 22: 597-598.
4. Mikulicz J. Über Operationen in der Brusthöhle mit Hilfe de Sauerbruch'schen Kammer bei Unter- und Überdruck. *Zentralbl Chir* 1904; 27: 46.
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## The possibilities of hormone replacement therapy started at the critical time

**To the Editor:** In 'Hormone replacement therapy — finally, good data',<sup>1</sup> Rosenberg and Hoffman disagree with two recent articles in the SAMJ<sup>2,3</sup> as well as with Herrington *et al.*<sup>4</sup> in the Estrogen Replacement and Atherosclerosis (ERA) study who state 'Another possible explanation for our results are that estrogen is more effective in preventing atherosclerosis than in slowing the progression of the disease once it is established.'

To justify the idea that HRT is not protective against heart disease one of the three studies quoted<sup>1</sup> is the Herrington ERA

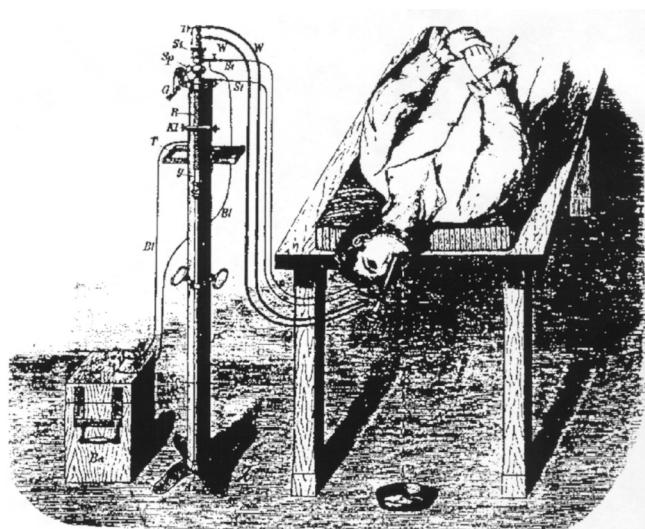


Fig. 1. Oesophagoscopy technique according to Mikulicz-Radecki (from Mikulicz J. *Ueber Gastroskopie und Oesophagoskopie*. Wien Med Presse 1881; 45: 1405-1408).