

Pages from the history of the “Anatomical Meeting” from Cluj

CRISTIAN BÂRSU

Department of History of Medicine, Social Sciences and Humanism, “Iuliu Hațieganu” University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Abstract

The “Anatomical Meeting” from Cluj was one of the most significant morpho-clinical societies from Romania during the interwar period. It was created in 1920 by Professor Titu Vasiliu (1885–1961). The purpose of our paper is to present the most important landmarks of this Society and to put into evidence its place in the Romanian series of morpho-clinical societies. *Documentary Material:* The activity reports of “Anatomical Meeting” from Cluj, summaries published in “Medical Cluj” journal referring to the presentations and discussions of the cases, which were held at different meetings of this Society. The activity of the “Anatomical Meeting” from Cluj increased, in a significantly and consistently way, the level of morphological and clinical training of physicians from Cluj. There are mentioned some of the most important presentations and the personalities which had special contributions in the evolution of this Society. *Conclusions:* The “Anatomical Meeting” was a scientific forum that propagated morpho-clinical concept in Romanian medicine, initially in Cluj, and then on a national level. It contributed to the collaboration between pathologists, clinicians and laboratory physicians from Cluj and favored scientific emulation between them. It also was a tribune from which were discussed a few new medical achievements.

Keywords: “Anatomical Meeting” from Cluj, morpho-clinical concept, medical and surgical cases, differential diagnosis, professors, Faculty of Medicine.

☞ Introduction

The “Anatomical Meeting” from Cluj was one of the most significant medical scientific societies in Romania during the interwar period. It was founded in May 1920, by Professor Titu Vasiliu (1885–1961), who directed it between 1920 and 1940. This Society was a tribune for the members of the Cluj Faculty of Medicine and for other physicians to discuss different medical and surgical cases and to enlarge their knowledge in pathology.

Unfortunately, after nearly a century since its founding, the history of this morpho-clinical society remains almost unknown. To counteract this situation, our article has the aim to analyze the most important aspects of the existence of this Society. Another aim is to identify its place in the series of Romanian morpho-clinical societies from the interwar period.

The documentary material of our paper is composed by: the activity reports of “Anatomical Meeting” from Cluj, summaries published in “Clujul Medical” journal, referring to the presentations and discussions of the cases which were held at different meetings and data regarding the career of some members of this Society.

☞ The “Anatomical Meeting” from Cluj

Chronologically, the “Anatomical Meeting” from Cluj was the second one in Romania. The first “Anatomical Society” was founded in Bucharest, in 1900. Some Romanian pathologist, who wrote articles about the development of pathology in Romania, such as Professor Emil Crăciun (1896–1976), considered that Professor Victor Babeș (1854–1926) was its founder [1]. Actually, at that time V. Babeș became the president of this Society.

It is interesting to know that in fact, the real founder of the “Anatomical Society” from Bucharest was the anatomist Francisc Rainer (1877–1944). He created this Society in December 1899. At that time, he was appointed assistant at the Laboratory of “Colțea” Hospital from Bucharest, under the guidance of Professor George Stoicescu (1848–1932). This important role of Rainer is certified in one of his letter written to his future wife – Marta Trancu (1875–1950). It was dated Bucharest, 12 December 1899. He noted: “I assumed all the trouble to found an « anatomic society », analogous with that from Paris. Babeș will be the President of this Society” [2]. Rainer elected Babeș as president, because he knew that Babeș “polarize with huge success the anatomo-clinico-biological orientation in Romanian medicine” [3].

The co-founder of this Society was the histologist Ion Bruckner (1877–1918). At that time, he was assistant at the microscopic section of the Anatomical Institute of the Bucharest Faculty of Medicine. The director of the Institute was Professor Thoma Ionescu (1860–1926) [4]. It is necessary to point out the fact that the “Anatomical Society” from Bucharest represented a strong impulse for initiation and publishing anatomo-clinical studies in Romania. Professor Crăciun mentioned that the “Anatomical Society” from Bucharest ceased its scientific meetings in 1918. They were reintroduced in 1938, when he was chief of the Institute of Pathology from Bucharest. In 1920, T. Vasiliu appreciated that: “the first Anatomical Society in our country was founded nearly 20 years ago, by Professor V. Babeș, according to the model of the Society from Paris. This Anatomical Society had no connection with the similar societies from abroad. And yet, it is a school which had students who later became

remarkable” [5]. To explain the difference between the views of Rainer and Vasiliu is useful to mention that Babeş had a very significant contribution in the development of the “Anatomical Society” from Bucharest. His international prestige was an essential element for establishing, in only few years, a leading position for this Society in Romania. Thus, Babeş can be considered one of the co-founders of this medical Society.

The third anatomical meeting from Romania was created at the Faculty of Medicine from Jassy by Professor Constantin Bacaloglu (1871–1942). It was named “Anatomo-Clinic Society”. It is useful to point out that Bacaloglu studied medicine in Paris, then he became specialist in pathology, under the guidance of V. Babeş. Between 1905 and 1924, Bacaloglu directed the clinics of internal pathology and internal medicine from Jassy [6]. For a short period (1930–1931), he directed the Institute of Pathology from the Bucharest Faculty of Medicine. In 1931, he was transferred to the Internal Clinic from the “Filantropia” Hospital from Bucharest.

Regarding the “Anatomical Meeting” from Cluj, it is necessary to enumerate some important landmarks about the large medical experience of its founder – Titu Vasiliu –, which helped him in this scientific organization. In 1920, he was associate professor at the Institute (Chair) of Pathology of the Faculty of Medicine in Cluj and the successor of Victor Babeş at this Chair. Before the First World War, Titu Vasiliu attended the Bucharest Faculty of Medicine. He was trained as clinician under the direction of Professor Ion Nanu Muşcel (1862–1938) and also as pathologist, under guidance of Prof. Dr. Victor Babeş. It should be noted that Titu Vasiliu had also the experience as bacteriologist, because in 1913 he participated in the Romanian bacteriological mission sent to Bulgaria. This mission was headed by Professor Victor Babeş and Professor Ioan Cantacuzino (1863–1934) and successfully fought against the epidemic of cholera. Then, in 1914, T. Vasiliu became specialist in pathology at Freiburg, under the direction of Professor Ludwig Aschoff (1866–1942) [7]. During the interwar period, having an extensive and profound learning, Titu Vasiliu acquired in short time the respect and the affection of his colleagues and became the indispensable co-worker of the school of internal medicine of Cluj, created by Professor Iuliu Haţieganu (1885–1959) [8].

Having vast clinical and laboratory knowledge, T. Vasiliu considered useful to organize some series of medical, surgical and pathological confrontations of opinions among the physicians from Cluj. In this context, it is significant to point out Titu Vasiliu’s conception about pathology: “pathology studies represent only one of sickness’ aspects, which cannot be studied only on the dead body [...]. The study of corpse pathology give us only some fragments from the real morpho-pathological alterations induced by diseases; for that reason, the clinical studies on sick man are indispensable and must be associated with pathology researches” [9]. One of his pupil – Victor V. Papilian (1920–1982) – appreciated Vasiliu’s conception about pathology as being “nearly obsessive dominated by anatomo-clinical confrontations” [10].

A special event in the existence of the “Anatomical

Meeting” from Cluj took place in 1923, when Titu Vasiliu affiliated it to the well-known “Anatomical Society” from Paris. His aim was to confer to the society from Cluj a greater extension and to have the opportunity to publish abroad the most outstanding presentations of rare cases. Thus, it was constituted the “Cluj Branch of the Anatomical Society of Paris”. Titu Vasiliu appreciated the fact that this French Society was one of the oldest morphological scientific meetings in Europe and had an increased reputation. This affiliation marked a new period in the existence of “Anatomical Meeting” from Cluj. It should be noted that the Anatomic Society of Paris was founded in 1803 by the surgeon Guillaume Dupuytren (1777–1835) and the internist René Théophile Hyacinthe Laennec (1781–1826). In 1803, Dupuytren was lecturer for the anatomical studies at the “Practical School for Dissection” (“École Pratique de Dissection”) from Paris. The program of this medical Society was focused on the human anatomy, the anatomy of the sick man, the physiology in the health status and in the state of illness [11].

To integrating the “Anatomical Meeting” from Cluj in the French Society, T. Vasiliu had the help of Professor Pierre Masson (1880–1959), who had established in Strasbourg a branch of the “Anatomical Society” from Paris, the help of Professor Brault – the president of Anatomical Society of Paris at that time, and also of Dr. Lucien Cornil, who was the archivist of the same Society [12]. The founding meeting of the “Cluj Branch of the Anatomical Society of Paris” was held in 24 November 1923, in the lecture room of the Cluj Institute of Pathology. Titu Vasiliu was elected president of this Branch. Iacob Iacobovici (1879–1959) – professor of surgery and Victor Papilian – professor of descriptive anatomy were elected vice-presidents. The members were: Gheorghe Bilaşcu (1863–1926) – professor of dentistry, Ion Goia (1892–1982) – associate professor at the Medical Clinic, Iuliu Haţieganu – professor at the Medical Clinic, René Jeannel (1879–1965) – subdirectory of the Speleological Institute of the Faculty of Sciences from Cluj, Mihail Kernbach (1895–1976) – lecturer at Cluj Forensic Institute, Gheorghe Martinescu (1874–1937) – professor of pharmacology, Ion Minea (1878–1941) – professor of neurology, Nicolae Minovici (1868–1941) – professor at the Cluj Forensic Institute, Ion Niţescu (1884–1971) – professor of physiology, Alexandru Rădulescu (1886–1979) – director of Pediatric and Orthopedics Surgery Hospital in Cluj, Ion Scriban (1879–1937) – professor of zoology at the Cluj Faculty of Sciences, Coriolan Tătaru (1889–1957) – professor of dermatology, Constantin Urechia (1883–1955) – professor of psychiatry and Ion Gălăşescu (1870–1938) – professor of histology. It is interesting to note that I. Scriban held histology courses for students of the Faculty of Medicine from Cluj between 1919 and 1923. Also, R. Jeannel had an ample cooperation with the Faculty of Medicine from Cluj, as he held courses in biology–genetics from 1920 to 1930. About I. Gălăşescu, it is worthy to mention that he was transferred in 1924 at the Department of Pathology of the Faculty of Medicine from Jassy.

It is surprisingly that among the members of the “Anatomical Meeting” were not present: Professor Cristea Grigoriu (1883–1951) from the Gynecological Clinic,

Professor Titu Gane (1883–1956) from the Pediatric Clinic and Professor Dimitrie Negru (1883–1955) from the Institute of Radiology, all members of the same Faculty of Medicine from Cluj.

As corresponding members, there were elected: Constantin Bonciu (1897–?) – assistant at the Institute of Pathology, Astra Călugăreanu (1898–?) – assistant at the Institute of Pathology, Liviu Câmpeanu (1889–1948) – lecturer at the Surgery Clinic, Haralamb Cruceanu (1897–1955) – assistant at the Institute of Anatomy, Alexandru Pop (1895–1954) – assistant at the Medical Clinic, Constantin C. Velluda (1893–1978) – lecturer at the Institute of Anatomy, etc. Secretary of this society was nominated Elvira Bolintineanu (?–1969) – lecturer at the Institute of Pathology and as cashier was elected Al. Pop [12]. We consider significant to note that Pop, at the beginning of his career was assistant at the Cluj Institute of Pathology; then he made a fruitful career as surgeon at the Surgical Clinic of Cluj. C. Velluda had a significant career in anatomy since 1919 until 1942. Then he became professor at the Chair of Pharmacology, having this job between 1942 and 1963.

In 1930, the management committee of the "Anatomical Meeting" was composed of: Titu Vasiliu – president, Iacob Iacobovici, Victor Papilian and Ioan Drăgoiu (1878–1941) – vice-presidents and Rubin Popa (1901–1958) – general secretary. There were also elected secretaries for each meeting, among whom there were: Mihai Mitrea (1893–1985), Tiberiu Spârchez (1899–1977), Coriolan Cotuțiu and Ion Danicico (1899–1981). It is very useful to underline the fact that M. Mitrea and I. Danicico became, in time, important surgeons. Spârchez became a prestigious gastroenterologist and Cotuțiu a well-known forensic doctor. The role of these secretaries was to record the minutes of each meeting. This fact allowed to put together the reports of meetings and to publish the summaries of the presentations and the discussions in Romanian medical journals, such as the "Clujul Medical" journal.

Regarding the purposes of the "Anatomical Meeting" from Cluj, initially they were focused on presentation of rare clinical cases, with difficulty in diagnosis or having unusual evolution. Over the years, the topics become diversified, including anatomical presentations, experimental medicine presentations and also different types of surgical interventions. It should be emphasized that there were multidisciplinary presentations, made by: a clinician – most commonly the physician who treated the patient, a pathologist who elaborated the microscopic diagnosis and, sometimes, the result of the autopsy (if it was the case), a radiologist and sometimes a few physicians from different laboratories, each giving the results of their examinations. The cases presented belonged to nearly all fields of medicine: internal medicine (including phthysiology, endocrinology, etc.), surgery (including urology, orthopedics, ophthalmology, ORL), pediatrics, neurology, psychiatry, etc.

Analyzing the activity reports of different meetings, it is obvious that in many cases the clinical diagnosis has been completed by the histopathological diagnosis. In a large number of cases, the macroscopic diagnosis established by post-mortem examination has been rectified

by microscopic diagnosis. Thus, it is useful to mention some examples.

The case of a 4-year-old child with clinical diagnosis of sarcoma of the right kidney or liver was presented at the meeting held on 25 October 1928, by Dr. Liviu Telia (1899–1956). The macroscopic diagnosis established by autopsy was sarcoma of the liver. The histological diagnosis was mixed tumor developed from embryonic remnants of the right kidney (metanephric).

The organs from the autopsy of a 61-year-old man were presented at the same meeting by Dr. Septimius Rusu. The clinical diagnosis was circulatory failure, myocarditis and pulmonary emphysema. The macroscopic diagnosis established at necropsy was tumor of the hilum of the lung. The microscopic diagnosis was primitive pulmonary sarcoma.

At the meeting held on 10 November 1928, M. Kernbach and C. Cotuțiu presented the case of a 61-year-old man who died after an accident at work. The clinical diagnosis was fracture of both legs. The diagnosis established by necropsy was open fracture in the right leg, left leg fracture and fracture of the left branch of the pubis. The microscopic diagnostic established a generalized fat embolism.

Some of the internal organs from the autopsy of a 46-year-old woman were presented by Titu Vasiliu and Ioan Dinescu at the meeting on 14 December 1929. The clinical diagnosis was mitral stenosis. At autopsy, the complete diagnosis was inflamed internal hemorrhoids with multiple venous thromboses, except the portal system.

It is interesting to note that at the "Anatomical Meeting" from Cluj many anatomists from the same city, led by Victor Papilian, presented experimental anatomical studies on human cadavers and animal. It is necessary to exemplify some of the most representative themes presented by Papilian – as they were mentioned in an historical overview by Professor Ion Albu (1920–2012): studies on the conducting system of the heart, in particular the atrio-ventricular bundle of His (co-author C. Velluda); the anatomical relationships between meninges and spinal nerves; the fibrous skeleton of the heart (in collaboration with C. Velluda); collagenous bundles of Rodet in man, dog and horse (co-worker Ioan Gabriel Russu); blood circulation in the pituitary gland; anatomical comparative study on the development of orbit, in correlation with the development of skull; arteriovenous anastomosis of carotid territory (co-author I. G. Russu); research on Keith-Flack and Tawara nodes (in collaboration with C. Velluda); studies on cerebellum (in collaboration with H. Cruceanu) and experimental contributions on the morpho-physiology of thoracic duct [13].

For demonstrating the way in which some diseases can occur and develop, V. Papilian presented frequently experiments on animals and on dead body, most of them being in collaboration with his colleagues from the Cluj Anatomic Institute or with surgeons from the same town. We mention some examples, to prove the great variety of research themes which Papilian had: the influence of autonomic nervous system on repair osteogenesis – experiments on rats (in collaboration with Vasile Blându); vascularization of tarsal scaphoid in Köhler disease; experimental ulcers of the stomach in dogs after

staphylococcus infections; the influence of autonomic nervous system on bone marrow, co-worker Ștefan Jianu (1902–1969); experimental gastric ulcers at dogs (in collaboration with Paul Sighet); experimental intestinal occlusion (co-author Paul Sighet); vascular sclerosis and reticulo-endothelial system blockage (in collaboration with I. G. Russu); experimental death after excision of carotid sinuses (in collaboration with Caius Antonescu); studies on periarterial sympathectomy (co-worker H. Cruceanu); autonomic nervous system influence on gastric juice (in collaboration with Liviu Funariu); hemolysis prevention by adrenaline (co-author Florica Antonescu-Mazilu); cranial hypertension and papilledema (in collaboration with C. Velluda), etc. [14].

At the “Anatomic Meeting” from Cluj, there were also frequently presented forensic cases of sudden death (caused by aortic aneurysm perforated the trachea, yellow atrophy of the liver, suppurative myocarditis and spontaneous rupture of the heart, etc.) or assassinations (for example intoxication with hydrogen arsenate). The authors of these presentations were Nicolae Minovici, Mihail Kernbach, Coriolan Cotuțiu, etc.

Regarding the frequency of meetings, initially Titu Vasiliu intended to set up every week a meeting. His purpose was to train the personnel of the Chair of Pathology and to establish an effective collaboration with physicians from the Cluj clinics, in particular with those of the Faculty of Medicine. Basically, it was almost impossible to do so numerous working sessions. Taking into account the causes that could lead to ranges inequality between meetings, we mention some of them. First of all, the number of professors and associate professors was insufficient, because the Faculty was created a few years ago. Also, not all professors agreed to present special cases of diseases, because they did not know very well the medical terminology in Romanian. This is explained by the fact that they were formed either at the Hungarian Faculty of Medicine in Cluj (which existed since 1872 until 1919) or abroad. It is also significant the historical context from the beginning of interwar period, when many repairs and modernizations of hospitals and university clinics of Cluj were needed.

However, as shown Rubin Popa in 1930, during the first decade of activity of the “Anatomical Meeting” from Cluj over 50 sessions took place. At these sessions were presented almost 300 studies about various fields of pathology. He added that the annual number of the meetings of the Society was rather limited, because it was the habit to concentrate the majority of scientific meetings at another society, entitled the “Medical Sciences Society” from Cluj. Indeed, the meetings of the “Medical Sciences Society” from Cluj were held regularly, almost every month, and the complexity of issues discussed was very impressive. This Society was founded in the Council meeting of the Faculty of Medicine of Cluj on the 31 January 1920 [15]. Titu Vasiliu and his colleagues who participated frequently at the “Anatomical Meeting” from Cluj: I. Hațieganu, I. Iacobovici, I. Goia, Al. Pop, etc. took also part to the “Medical Sciences Society”. Thus, it was a competition between these two societies. Obviously, there were some similarities and differences between these two societies. The “Medical Sciences

Society” took advantage of the “Anatomical Meeting”, in that it included pharmaceutical topics.

The majority of presentations were followed by discussions, some of them even temperamentally asserted, involving teaching staff, clinicians and students present at those meetings. In these discussions, either were requested additional information about the cases presented or professors gave details about their own experiences and shown data from the medical literature.

Analyzing the reports presented at different meetings, it is clear that sometimes took place contradictory discussions between professors, about the interpretation of lesions. Such a moment occurred when V. Papilian exposed some cadaver experiments, done to verify the theory of the French anatomist Paul Poirier (1853–1907). The latest cons on the role of the interosseous membrane in fractures of the lower end of radius. Papilian demonstrated that the force impulse was transmitted directly to carp and not by interosseous membrane. His calculations were contradicted by I. Iacobovici. He argued that the special role in lower radius fractures belongs to anatomical structures and geometric configuration of radius.

Sometimes contradictory discussions were based on the diagnosis accuracy. For example, in a case of streptococcal septicemia, I. Goia declared that he did not intend to apologize for the wrong diagnosis set by some physicians from the clinic he directed, “but only to say that in another similar case, he would establish the same diagnosis”. Looking from historical perspective, it is understandable the difficulties encountered in establishing some diagnosis, due to the limits of medical techniques during the interwar period.

On the anniversary of the first decade of the existence of the “Anatomical Meeting” from Cluj, held on 11 November 1930, Rubin Popa showed that this society fulfilled its roles: to assemble together physicians, both from laboratory and from clinics for the progress of medicine, to discuss interesting cases and difficult necropsies, and to correlate the clinical symptoms to the morphological disorders. He added that “from this professional collaboration will emerge, through reciprocity, the expansion of our knowledge” [12].

It should be noted that Titu Vasiliu and his co-workers from the “Anatomical Meeting”: I. Hațieganu, I. Iacobovici, I. Goia, M. Kernbach, Al. Pop and so on, participated also at the meetings of the “Medical Sciences Society” from Cluj. Thus, it was a competition between these two societies. One of the differences between these two societies came from their different purposes. The “Anatomical Meeting” from Cluj was focused on the morphological and clinical aspects, while the “Medical Sciences Society” had a wider sphere of activity, which included the pharmaceutical sciences.

☞ Conclusions

The “Anatomical Meeting” from Cluj was a scientific forum that propagated the morpho-clinical concept in Romanian medicine, initially in Cluj, then in a larger area. This medical society contributed to the collaboration between pathologists, clinicians and laboratory physicians and favored scientific emulation of them. It also was a

tribune from which were discussed a few new medical theories. By the accuracy and complexity of clinical and pathological descriptions, the "Anatomical Meeting" from Cluj was an example for the medical students training. It also favored direct collaboration between the medical staff of the Faculty Medicine from Cluj, young physicians and students. They appreciated the advantage of having a permanent incentive for their future careers. Recording the sessions of the "Anatomical Meeting" by minutes, which were published in a few Romanian medical journals such as "Clujul Medical", was an effective source of morpho-clinical information for many physicians in Romania.

Conflict of interests

The author declares that he has no conflict of interests.

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Corresponding author

Cristian Bârsu, Associate Professor, MD, PhD, Department of History of Medicine, Social Sciences and Humanism, "Iuliu Hațieganu" University of Medicine and Pharmacy, 31 Avram Iancu Street, 400083 Cluj-Napoca, Romania; Phone +40264–599 983, e-mail: cristianbarsu@yahoo.com

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