

Tribute to Professor Constantin N. Arseni (1912-1994)

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A big-hearted Moldavian Man, such as all the greatest surgeons ever born in Romania, the one that would become one of the founding fathers of Romanian Neurosurgery, Professor Constantin Arseni, was born in the County of Suceava, in the small settlement of Dolhasca, into a very poor family at the 3rd of February 1912.

He leaves for Cluj in 1929 where he graduates Medical School 6 years later in 1935 and presents his PhD thesis entitled “Juxtaprotuberantial neurotomy for the treatment of intermittent trigeminal neuralgia” on the 30th of June 1936. A first such title for Romania, as neurosurgery had never been before the subject of a PhD thesis; the paper caught the attention of the professors examining it and received the highest score possible.

Committing his life to medicine, young Arseni got his stripes quickly and entered the medical learning system as teaching assistant between the years 1937 and 1944 at the discipline of Pathology which was led by Professor I.T. Niculescu.

Pursuing a career in surgery he worked for 3 years at the Emergency Hospital in Bucharest where he honed his skills as a surgeon; soon after he will embark on a journey to help put the basis of the Romanian School of Neurosurgery.

At only 34, the young doctor Constantin Arseni was appointed Chief of the neurosurgical department at the Central Hospital for Mental, Nervous and Endocrinological diseases, carrying on the legacy of Professor D. Bagdasar.

He was appointed Assistant Professor in 1952 and Professor of Neurosurgery in 1963. In the year 1964 the Clinic led by Professor Arseni had 220 beds. At the time it was the best outfitted neurosurgery department in the country.

A true pillar of Romanian Medicine, Professor Arseni completes the titanic task to modernize the department and in the year 1975 the biggest neurosurgery clinic in Europe is opened. The 550 available beds transformed the hospital into the confirmation of neurosurgery’s value among the medical specialties in Romania.





Understanding the true necessity for an interdisciplinary approach of the patients, Professor Arseni reunites under the same roof all the neurosurgical specialties: craniocerebral trauma surgery, spinal trauma surgery, intracranial expansive process surgery, vascular neurosurgery, spinal tumor and degenerative disease surgery, pediatric neurosurgery, functional neurosurgery, neurorecovery and of course neurosurgical intensive care. At the same time the neurosurgical pathology department underwent a full development process. In this way the Bagdasar-Arseni Hospital was born, the most modern and best equipped neurosurgery clinic in Romania.

An important element in Prof. Arseni's activity was the real preoccupation for clinic and fundamental research. In this respect he created within the neurology, neuropsychiatry and neurosurgery institute a special research department which was outfitted at the standards of the period.

Not only research had to gain, but methods of investigation and treatment were updated as well. In the developing of the Bucharest Neurosurgery Clinic, a tremendous achievement was the first usage

of a Computed Tomography machine in 1982. This event immediately raised the value of diagnostics and follow-up for the neurosurgical pathology. Under the careful and strict lead of Professor Arseni the scientific and publishing activities got a tremendous impulse. This explains the birth of 54 titles in neurosurgery, neurology, neurorecovery and neurosurgical intensive care.

A few of these titles stand out. Among them we mention

- "Vascular diseases of the brain and spinal cord" – C. Arseni, I. Petrovici, F. Nash, V. Cunesco – 1964

- "Cranio-cerebral traumatology" – C. Arseni, I. Oprescu – 1972

- "Neurosurgical semeiology" – C. Arseni, A. Constantinescu, M. Maretsis – 1977

- "Pathology of CNS Tumors" – C. Arseni, N. Carp - 1978

- "Treatise of Neurology" (in 5 volumes) – C. Arseni – 1979-1982

- "Parasitic diseases of the Central Nervous System" – C. Arseni, A.V. Ciurea – 1981.

- "Epilepsy" – C. Arseni, L. Popoviciu - 1984

- "Clinical atlas of electroencephalography" – C. Arseni, I. Roman - 1986

A dedicated surgeon, Prof. Arseni practiced his job demanding from those around him nothing less than what he offered – the maximum. He committed himself to the patient publishing exceptional papers in the domain of pediatric neurosurgery.

- "Troubles in neurosurgical diagnostics in child pathology" – C. Arseni, L. Horvath, A.V. Ciurea 1978

- "Neurosurgical pathology in infants" C. Arseni, L. Horvath, A.V. Ciurea – 1981



His studies remained classical pieces in neurosurgery, especially in what regards parasitic diseases. His papers are quoted in this respect even in the year 2012.

Cerebral abscesses, cranial trauma

surgery, classifications of traumatic comas, basal nuclei tumor approaches, pain pathology, neurosurgical semeiology, pathology of CNS tumors or original classifications of craniostenoses are only a

few of the topics he approached in his vast career.

Professor Arseni was a teacher in the true meaning of the word. Although criticized by some for his didactic extremism, he taught neurosurgery the hard way; most of the Chiefs of the Neurosurgery departments in Romania today are his ex-students.

As a token of gratitude for his contributions for the health of the Romanian people, Constantin Arseni was appointed member of the Romanian Academy in the year 1980 and President of the Romanian Academy of Medical Sciences in 1982.

He lifted Romanian neurosurgery at high esteem in the World and left behind a legacy hard to match for those who followed him.

There is no doubt that Professor Constantin Arseni's name will always be

associated with the constant fight for perfection and with the absolute love a doctor has for his patients and fellow humans well being.

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