

Hnat Mykhailovych Matyashin: the difficult path of a soldier, surgeon, scientist, and teacher

The life and professional path of Professor Hnat Mykhailovych Matyashin: a scientist and surgeon, Doctor of Medical Sciences, Honoured Scientist of the Ukrainian SSR, Honoured Doctor of the Ukrainian SSR, Chief Surgeon of the Ministry of Health of the Ukrainian SSR, Head of the Department of Faculty Surgery of the Kyiv Medical Institute.

To reach the goal a person needs only one thing. Go.
Honore de Balzac



Hnat Mykhailovych Matyashin was born on November 11, 1925, in the village of Andreyevka, Selidiv district, Donetsk region. He was a descendant and successor of one of the oldest medical dynasties. His parents were doctors, and his great-grandfather and grandfather on his father's side were paramedics. H. M. Matyashin grew up in a healthy, friendly family atmosphere where human dignity was respected, work was valued, and books were loved. Throughout his lifetime, he adhered to his parents' teachings regarding the moral superiority of principles, the ability to take on the responsibilities of others, the values of democracy, and faithfulness to one's word.

After finishing high school, Hnat Mykhailovych entered the Arkhangelsk Medical Institute. However, he quickly realised that his real mission was to serve

as his Motherland's defender, as there was World War II. He transferred to the machine-gun school and in 1943, as an eighteen-year-old young man, he received his baptism of fire, first as a soldier and then as a machine-gun platoon commander and tank landing platoon commander. Hnat Mykhailovych took part in battles during the fording of the Dnieper at the Bukryn and Lyutizh bridgeheads for Kyiv, Fastiv, and Zhytomyr. For his courage and bravery, he was awarded the Order of the Red Star. During the war, H. M. Matyashin was wounded twice. After the second wound received under Proskurov in 1944, which appeared to be very severe (a blind shrapnel wound of the spine with subsequent osteomyelitis), H. M. Matyashin was demobilised. He had to be treated for a long time. Hnat Mykhailovych underwent 16 difficult operations for osteomyelitis of the spine. In 1945, H. M. Matyashin entered the Donetsk Medical Institute, from which he graduated in 1950. It was at the institute that Hnat Mykhailovych began to demonstrate that special style of intensity and ardour that marked his behaviour in later life.

From 1952 to 1964, Hnat Mykhailovych worked at the department of general surgery of the Donetsk Medical Institute (the head of the department was Professor O. I. Charugin), having progressed from a clinical resident to the head of the department (1964). In 1956, he defended his candidate's thesis, and in 1964, his doctoral thesis. During that period, he actively mastered one of the most difficult sections of surgery — reconstructive operations on the esophagus. And here H. M. Matyashin's will and extraordinary determination were manifested, which led him to the peak of professional skill. Hnat Mykhailovych becomes a well-known surgeon and scientist and gains significant authority in the medical community.

In 1968, H. M. Matyashin was elected head of the Department of Faculty Surgery of the Kyiv Medical Institute. Having assumed the leadership of one of the oldest, most honourable, academic clinics in the country, Hnat Mykhailovych not only continued the glorious traditions of his predecessors with honour, but also managed to find new ways for the further development of these traditions.

Gathering a team around him, H. M. Matyashin, year after year, expanded the scope of the clinic's creative and scientific research activities. The period of 1968–1979 can be considered the most fruitful for Hnat Mykhailovych. During this time, more than 100 scientific studies were published, including 5 monographs. He trained 20 candidates (27 in total) and 5 doctors of medical sciences. H. M. Matyashin gave a lot of effort and time to the reconstruction of the clinic, its equipment, the organisation of work in new conditions, the implementation of novel techniques and methods of diagnosis and treatment, and the organisation of the pedagogical process.

After the completion of the reconstruction of the clinic (in just 2 years), Hnat Mykhailovych said the prophetic words: «The reconstruction of the clinic will remain a good memory of my existence». So, simply put, once and for all!

However, the activity of H. M. Matyashin was not limited only to the interests of the clinic. He was actively engaged in social activities. In 1970, Hnat Mykhailovych was appointed chief surgeon of the Ministry of Health of the Ukrainian SSR, and since 1976 he had been an honorary member of the International Society of Surgeons. In these positions, he gained great authority, and the wider surgical community treated him with deep respect. H. M. Matyashin's bust, created by the renowned sculptor M. K. Vronsky, was placed in the lobby of the Department of Faculty at the Kyiv Medical Institute as a tribute to his outstanding achievements.

Hnat Mykhailovych died prematurely, yet he died as he should have, till the very end, fulfilling his professional duty. I left to stay forever! H. M. Matyashin died in his office as the chief surgeon of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine at 10 o'clock in the morning on October 30, 1979, before reaching the age of 54, in the presence of the members of the commission, which consisted of 15 professors from all regions of the USSR, who checked the state of surgical care in Ukraine and gave a positive evaluation of its organisation.

The funeral of Hnat Mykhailovych took place on November 2, 1979, at the Baikovo cemetery.

H. M. Matyashin stood out for his generosity and kindness. He was a faithful friend, a wise adviser, and if necessary, a fair judge. Hnat Mykhailovych never

felt lonely. He liked to repeat that those who are lonely live only by themselves and for themselves, and he claimed that contact with the thoughts of others causes mental work, whatever that thought may be. H. M. Matyashin established the proctology centre from the beginning. During that period, there was no differentiation between a general physician and a proctologist, and there was no official definition for the centre, as well as a lack of technical and instrumental equipment. He solved these problems at the level of the City Department of Health and the Ministry of Health of Ukraine in a short period of time. It was more difficult to train doctors, and he also solved that problem successfully, as evidenced by the high reputation of the centre and its recognition in Europe. Throughout its existence, the centre has published five doctoral dissertations, approximately 20 candidate's theses, six monographs, 23 methodological recommendations, and information sheets. Additionally, the centre has successfully organised the first four congresses of coloproctologists with international participation. The centre also performs operative interventions at a technologically advanced level, achieving outcomes comparable to those in Europe.

Hnat Mykhailovych analysed the works written by the scientific staff, revised them, engaged in discussions about facts and ideas, provided constructive criticism tactfully, and smiled when he was satisfied. The visits to the teacher to discuss their works, despite their strictly professional nature, were a remarkable experience for engaging in profound dialogue with the ideal representation of a doctor – a clinician, a scientist, as he portrayed himself.

Hnat Mykhailovych was a passionate lover of books. When he had a few free hours and could read, he picked up a book, having a sense of anticipation for a reading retreat. He had been attracted to books since a young age and possessed both innate and educated intelligence.

His deep respect for the memory of his predecessors was impressive. H. M. Matyashin requested that a monument honouring V. A. Karavaev be preserved. Hnat Mykhailovych initiated the department's tradition of cleaning up the established memorial sites of its personnel at least twice a year.

H. M. Matyashin often provided consultations for the most difficult patients in Kyiv, including Feofania, as well as regional and university centres in Vinnytsia, Poltava, Kharkiv, and Dnipropetrovsk.

Hnat Mykhailovych did not tolerate standardised procedures in clinical work, in diagnostic frameworks, or in patient interaction. He was a master at individual diagnosis. He consistently identified

distinctions and unique nuances of disease symptoms, which he skillfully used for precise diagnosis.

Diagnoses were made quickly. He recognised the characteristics of the illness immediately. He was rarely mistaken in his diagnoses. He was well-versed in physical examination techniques and X-ray diagnostics. Courage enabled him to agree to complicated operations. The work of a surgeon always gave him a sense of fulfilment.

H. M. Matyashin had statesmanlike thinking, outstanding organisational skills, high professionalism, and business acumen.

Hnat Mykhailovych became famous for his exceptional abilities as a surgeon, teacher, scientist, and organiser, as well as his high morality, social participation, and dedication to public service. H. M. Matyashin received the Order of the Red Banner of Labour in recognition of his labour activities and

the honorary title of Honoured Scientist of the Ukrainian SSR. H. M. Matyashin once said: «Everything I did and am doing is the result of the fact that I wanted and want to be a good doctor and surgeon». Impressive words! He served as a role model for both young and experienced doctors.

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