

The golden era of Kyiv surgery

The article discusses the academic and university surgery in Kyiv during the 1920s. It is based on data obtained from extensive archival research and available bibliographic sources, and it highlights a specific period of the work of the Faculty Surgical Clinic of Kyiv St. Volodymyr University, which is now known as Bogomolets National Medical University. The article presents information about the lives and professional journeys of the heads and staff of the surgical clinic, including Yevhen Cherniakhivskyi, Yurii Voronyi, Vira Hedroyts, Mykola Volkovych, and Oleksii Lazurenko.

Kyiv St. Volodymyr University

Kyiv St. Volodymyr University was established in 1833, with the medical faculty commencing surgical procedures in 1841. As per its charter, the faculty initially had two surgical departments: 1) operative surgery with topographic anatomy, desmurgy, and surgical clinic; 2) theoretical surgery with ophthalmology. In 1847, a hospital surgical clinic with 64 beds was inaugurated at the Kyiv Military Hospital, which eventually became the relevant base for the department. In 1885, the discipline of operative surgery with topographic anatomy was granted a separate department, and in 1899, the Department of Surgical Pathology was formed. By the end of the 19th century, the medical faculty had four surgical departments. These departments were based at the Oleksandrivska Hospital, the Kyiv Military Hospital, and the Faculty Surgical Clinic. The clinic operated eight months a year, had 20 beds, and was situated in the university's central (red) building. Oleksandr Karavayev had run the clinic since its establishment. In 1885, the clinic was relocated to a new building at 17 Shevchenko Boulevard, which now houses Kyiv Municipal Clinical Hospital No 18.

The University Faculty Clinic

The idea of creating a full-fledged university clinic in Kyiv had been around for almost 190 years. A crucial step in that direction was the opening of university faculty clinics in 1885–1888: surgical, therapeutic, ophthalmic, and obstetrics and gynecology. The clinics were situated in the main building of St. Volodymyr University, a location that was unsuitable for patient treatment and caused inconvenience for students from other university faculties. In addition to faculty clinics, the medical faculty also included hospital clinics (departments) located in other Kyiv hospitals. Thus, faculty clinics served as educational and treatment centres for only a few clinical departments. There was a project to create a separate university clinic for hospital departments. In 1913, its construction began on Batiyeva Gora (a historical district in

Kyiv). During the First World War (1915), 90% of the completed buildings housed military infirmaries. In 1925, the KGB took over these buildings from the medical institute to establish a «police academy», which now houses the F. G. Yanovsky National Institute of Phthsiology and Pulmonology [2].

The Faculty Surgical Clinic on Shevchenko Boulevard (formerly Bibikovsky Boulevard until 1919) originally had two floors, with two more built in the 1960s. Professors Oleksandr Rinek and Lev Malinovsky headed it at the end of the 19th century. The clinic had 30 beds for outpatient and inpatient care (with separate areas for men and women). The clinic personnel included the director (head of the department), full-time and part-time residents, docents and private docents, and trainees (up to 10 people in total). The data provided show that the faculty surgical clinic performed worse than surgical care institutions in Kyiv.

Mykola Volkovich became the dean of the Department of Faculty Surgery (and clinic) in 1911.



Mykola Volkovich

Prior to this period, he served as the head of the surgical department of the Oleksandriv Hospital, and from 1908, he led the Kyiv Society of Surgeons, which he founded.

In 1922, Professor Yevhen Chernyakhivskyi directed the clinic. During that period, the clinic was under the jurisdiction of the Kyiv Medical Institute. It was founded in 1920 by combining the medical faculties of St. Volodymyr University and the Ukrainian National University, the Women's Medical Institute, and the Odontological Institute. The institute introduced the position of «director of faculty clinics» in the late 1920s, which involved financial management responsibilities. The head of the department was considered the head of the clinic and was responsible for medical issues [4].

The «Report of Departments and Clinics of the Institute for 1922–1923» describes the state of the department as follows: «At the Faculty Surgical Clinic, there is a laboratory and a museum, but due to unfavorable material conditions (lack of fuel, lack of reagents, and accessories), the laboratory and museum do not work. The supply of various medical assets is severely limited. The medical equipment is in such a state that it requires significant repair and renewal. The clinic's premises, particularly the operating room, are in dire need of major repairs. Last winter, the clinic did not function due to a lack of fuel (the average temperature in the operating room and dressing rooms was 2 degrees). (...) the department hosts scientific meetings where clinic employees discuss all interesting and difficult cases. The meetings are held every week.» During that period, the clinic had 35 beds.

In 1928–1929 Professor Vera Gedroits ran the clinic.

The «Report of Departments and Clinics of the Institute for 1935» describes the state of the department as follows: «The Faculty Surgical Clinic is located in building No. 17 on Shevchenko Boulevard, occupying 1,123 square meters. The clinic occupies the building that dates back to 1880. It is a 2-story brick building with an iron roof. The clinic occupies the lower floor. The house has central heating, exhaust ventilation, electric lighting, water supply, and sewage. The premises need major renovation. The clinic has 65 beds. The clinic features an auditorium, but it lacks an outpatient clinic. The department lacks adequate equipment. It has a lot of old property, partially damaged surgical instruments, and a poorly equipped laboratory. The clinic has a library consisting of a large number of both Russian and foreign magazines of the pre-revolutionary period.»

During the Nazi occupation of Kyiv (1941–1943), the corresponding department of the city hospital,

later the German military hospital, functioned in the building of the Faculty Surgical Clinic.

After the Second World War, the buildings of the faculty clinics were gradually transferred from the institute to the municipal property; the departments continue to function in them (today, the Department of Surgery No. 1 of Bogomolets National Medical University is located here).

In the historical context, the Faculty Surgical Clinic is defined mostly by the prominent people who worked in it. The period of the 1920s and 30s of the last century, when the Faculty's Surgical Clinic experienced the heyday of its scientific potential, appears to be particularly vivid. However, important social processes occurred within the hospital's walls over those years. These processes hold a special significance in today's world.

Yevhen Chernyakhivskyi

Early Soviet authorities announced a policy of Ukrainianization, which directly affected the Kyiv Medical Institute, at the beginning of its approval process. It provided for conducting the scientific and medical process in the Ukrainian language. In 1922, the faculty surgical clinic and the corresponding department were headed by Professor Yevhen Chernyakhivskyi. He graduated from Kyiv University and had two brothers, Oleksandr and Mykhailo, who were doctors.

Mykhailo Chernyakhivskyi, also a surgeon, was one of the co-founders of the student scientific society at the medical faculty of St. Volodymyr University. He worked in a military hospital in Kyiv. After defending his thesis, he received the title of professor.



Yevhen Chernyakhivskyi

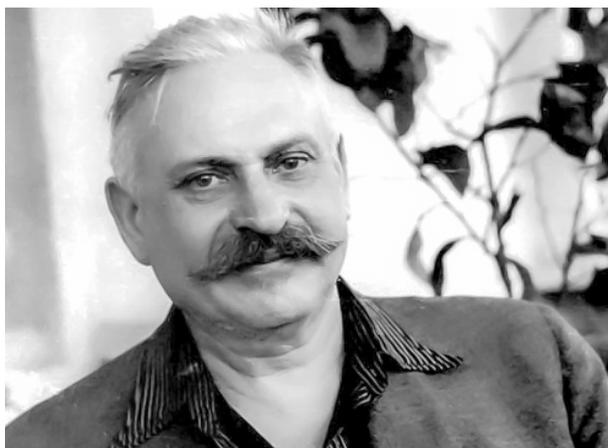
In 1900, he headed the Department of Surgery at Warsaw University. During the First World War, this university was evacuated to Rostov-on-Don, where he continued to lead and was the initiator of the construction of a surgical clinic.

Oleksandr Chernyakhivskiy is a histologist, head of the histology department at the Kyiv Medical Institute in the 1920s and at the beginning of the 1930s at the Donetsk Medical Institute. Professor Chernyakhivskiy is the author of the first Ukrainian-language textbook on histology and the Ukrainian-Latin dictionary of medical terminology. Oleksandr Chernyakhivskiy and his wife, Lyudmila Chernyakhivska-Starytska, are bright representatives of the Ukrainian intelligentsia who suffered Stalinist repressions. In 1930, they were arrested on a fabricated case of the SVU (Union for the Liberation of Ukraine).

Yevhen Chernyakhivskiy, after graduating from the medical faculty, worked as a surgeon at the Oleksandriivska Hospital. He authored the first report in a scientific journal in the Russian Empire, detailing the successful suturing of a heart wound from a stab wound. In the Oleksandriivska hospital, he worked under Professor Mykola Volkovich's leadership, who in 1908 founded the Kyiv Society of Surgeons. Yevhen Chernyakhivskiy became the first secretary of the society. In addition to medical work, he conducted scientific research on transplantation issues. He authored reports and publications on experimental vascular surgery. During the revolutionary events of 1917–1921, Professor Chernyakhivskiy took an active pro-Ukrainian political position. With his brother Oleksandr, he participated in creating the medical faculty of the Ukrainian National University, the first higher education institution with the Ukrainian language of instruction. In 1918, he held the post of chief physician of the Oleksandriiv Hospital. In 1920, he became the first rector of the newly established Institute of Health Care (later the Kyiv Medical Institute). In 1922, he headed the faculty surgical clinic. Yevhen Chernyakhivskiy actively introduced vascular surgery into practice and continued to deal with issues of experimental transplantation. In 1928, he was arrested on a fabricated case and dismissed from the medical institute without the right to practice medicine and teach. While leading the clinic, the professor invited graduate student Yury Voronyi, professor Mykola Volkovich, professor Vira Gedroits, and professor (and future academician) Oleksiy Krym to work at the department [1].

Yurii Voronyi

Yuriy Voronyi, the son of the world-famous Ukrainian mathematician Georgy Voronyi, entered the medical faculty of Kyiv University in 1913. In 1918,



Yurii Voronyi

as part of a student unit, he participated in the battle near Kruty with Bolshevik troops. In 1921, he graduated from the Kyiv Medical Institute and entered postgraduate studies under the supervision of Professor Yevhen Chernyakhivskiy. Yuriy Voronyi admired his manager's ideas about transplantation. In 1926, he moved to Kharkiv. In 1933, Yuriy Voronyi was the first in the world to transplant an entire human organ, namely, a cadaveric kidney [3].

Vira Gedroits

Vira Gedroits graduated from the medical faculty of the University of Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1898. She worked at the university under the leadership of the world's leading surgeon, Caesar Roux. She successfully defended her thesis twice, in 1903 and 1912, earning the title of «Doctor of Medicine.» She worked as a military surgeon during the Russo-Japanese and First World Wars. She worked as one of the doctors of the imperial family. Vira Gedroits, in addition to medical practice, was the author of numerous poems and prose works. In 1918, while working at the front, she was wounded and evacuated to Kyiv. Since 1919, Vira Gedroits had been working as a surgeon in the polyclinic. In 1920, she took part in the head and neck surgery clinic's organisation and began working at the Kyiv Medical Institute. In 1921, at the invitation of Professor Yevhen Chernyakhivskiy, he began working in the faculty surgical clinic. In 1923, she became the first female surgeon in the world to receive the title of «professor». In 1928, she headed the Department of Faculty Surgery of the Kyiv Medical Institute and became the world's first woman head of the Department of Surgery. In 1930, for political reasons, Vira Gedroits was dismissed from the medical institute without the right to teach and practice medicine.

Thus, outstanding professionals, including the founder of the Kyiv Society of Surgeons and the



Vira Gedroits

author of the classic approach to the appendix vermiformis, the world's first female professor of surgery, and the surgeon who performed organ transplantation for the first time in world history, all worked together in the Faculty Surgical Clinic of the Kyiv Medical Institute, under the leadership of the first rector, Yevhen Chernyakhivskiy.

In the same period, associate professor Oleksiy Lazurenko worked at the department. In 1941, he became the rector of the Kyiv Medical Institute (since 1942, the Polymedical Institute), which functioned from 1941 to 1943 in Nazi-occupied Kyiv. Oleksiy Lazurenko petitioned the German command to open a higher medical educational institution in

Kyiv. About 1,000 students studied there during its existence, and 41 departments operated. In 1942, he was arrested by the Gestapo and shot in Babiy Yar. References to Oleksiy Lazurenko and the existence of a medical institute in Kyiv during the Nazi occupation were strictly prohibited by the Soviet authorities, and archival documents were kept under the label «secret» until recently.

In the 1930s, Stalin's terror reached its maximum scale. For the Ukrainians, it began at the end of the 1920s, and among the employees of the faculty surgical clinic, only Professor Krymov managed to avoid persecution. Others became victims of the merciless and senseless Soviet repressive machine. Most of the names of these people were unjustly erased from history. Thus, in the «Report of Departments and Clinics of the Institute from 1935, it is noted that Professor Krymov had been in charge of the department since 1913 (although he headed the department only in 1930), and the names of Professors Volkovych, Chernyakhivskiy, and Gedroits, who managed the clinic in the period between 1913 and 1930 years, are absent. There is no mention of these professors in the book dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the Kyiv Medical Institute (published in 1947). Instead, the chapter on the history of Kyiv surgery is summarised as follows: «The Great October Socialist Revolution finally freed Soviet surgery from foreign dependence and opened wide prospects for its independent development».

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У статті описані аспекти функціонування академічної та університетської хірургії в Києві у 1920-х. На основі даних, отриманих після широкого архівного пошуку та аналізу наявних бібліографічних джерел, проілюстровано один із періодів роботи факультетської хірургічної клініки Київського університету святого Володимира (нині — Національний медичний університет імені О.О. Богомольця). Наведено факти про життєвий і професійний шлях керівників та працівників хірургічної клініки, зокрема, Євгена Черняхівського, Юрія Вороного, Віри Гедройц, Миколи Волковича, Олексія Лазуренка.