

Yosyp Hryhorovych Turovets – a life devoted to surgery

This article reviews the life and professional achievements of Yosyp Hryhorovych Turovets (1899–1987), an outstanding surgeon, scientist, and educator. It traces his path from a childhood in a peasant family in Volhynia to his professorship at the Kyiv Medical Institute. It highlights his academic training, clinical residency, and early medical practice, where his organisational skills became apparent. The article examines his wartime service in evacuation hospitals, participation in military campaigns, and research on gunshot wounds to blood vessels and joints. It notes his contributions to military field surgery, traumatology, reconstructive techniques, and the invention of a unique traumatological device. The article also discusses his post-war scientific and teaching activities, departmental leadership, training of scientific personnel, implementation of innovative surgical methods, and production of educational films. It emphasises his role in introducing the term «herniology» and advancing hernia surgery. The article concludes by recognising Turovets' significant impact on Ukrainian and global medicine, clinical science, and medical education.



Yosyp Hryhorovych Turovets was born on 1 April 1899 in the village of Nemylnia, Gulsk (Rogachiv) volost, Novograd-Volynskiy district, Volyn province (now Zhytomyr region) into a peasant family. He spent his childhood and youth in poverty, working hard on his native land. He attended a rural school and finished the Zhytomyr Educational Seminary in 1920. The challenging living conditions and the hard labour of peasants fostered in him a sense of prudence, kindness, and empathy, inspiring him to pursue a career in medicine and devote his life to improving public health in his homeland and throughout the world. In 1921, Yosyp Hryhorovych enrolled in the medical faculty of the Kyiv Medical Institute, graduating in 1926,

and completed medical training at the Kyiv Clinical Military Hospital by 1928.

In 1928, Y. H. Turovets began a clinical residency in the Department of Propaedeutic Surgery at the Kyiv Medical Institute, which he completed in 1931. He then served as chief physician and surgeon at the district hospital in Velykyi Tokmak, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast until 1934. During this period, Yosyp Hryhorovych demonstrated strong organisational skills and talent by establishing and equipping an X-ray room, operating theatre, surgical department, and other hospital departments, significantly raising the hospital's surgical standards and making it the best district hospital and surgical facility in the region.

In September 1934, Yosyp Hryhorovych was appointed assistant professor of the Department of Propaedeutic Surgery at the Kyiv Medical Institute. In 1937, he defended his thesis on «Surgery for colon cancer».

From 1939, Y. H. Turovets was a senior resident at the surgical clinic of the Kyiv Military Hospital. He was a student of S. T. Novitsky, who later headed the Department of Operative Surgery at the Kyiv Medical Institute.

From September 1939 to August 1940, Yosyp Hryhorovych took part in the Polish and Finnish wars. In June 1940, a conference on military field surgery was held in Kyiv, during which a wide range of issues was discussed. Kyiv surgeon Y. H. Turovets shared his experience of working in an evacuation hospital during recent military conflicts, outlining requirements for the treatment of gunshot wounds.

As a result of the conference discussions, an official ban was instituted on the immediate application

of primary sutures after the initial surgical treatment of gunshot wounds.

In June 1941, Yosyp Hryhorovych was drafted into the army once again, serving until January 1946. According to personal records from the command and management staff of the Kyiv Military Hospital dated July 1941, Y. H. Turovets held the position of resident physician and was classified as a military doctor of the 2nd rank at that time.

From June 1941 to May 1943, Yosyp Hryhorovych served as head of the surgical department at the Kyiv Military Hospital. After the hospital's evacuation to Tomsk, he supervised the training of military surgeons. In addition to serving as the head of the hospital department, he held the position of associate professor in the Department of Surgery at the Tomsk Medical Institute. In May 1942, Y. H. Turovets was sent to the front, where he served as the chief surgeon of the triage hospital and as an inspector-surgeon on the Southwestern, Stalingrad, Southern, and 4th Ukrainian fronts. During World War II, Major Turovets, as head of the trauma department at the Kyiv Military Hospital, collected extensive material on hip joint injuries and the surgical treatment of gunshot wounds to blood vessels. He noted that unfavourable outcomes in cases of gunshot wounds to blood vessels were associated with delays in receiving qualified medical assistance. In 1942, Yosyp Hryhorovych published an article in the journal «Surgery» entitled «Gunshot wounds to blood vessels». This work was later cited by the famous American surgeon Michael E. DeBakey in his 1946 article, «Battle injuries of the arteries in World War II», in *Annals of Surgery*.

According to the characteristics and review of the commander of military unit N 11956 dated 06.03.1951, Y. H. Turovets demonstrated exceptional qualifications as a surgeon, teacher, and scientist on the fronts of World War II. While serving on the front lines, he developed new techniques and addressed challenges in treating gunshot wounds to blood vessels and other injuries. He also designed an original, universal trauma traction device that was widely used in hospitals.

By integrating practical surgical and organisational responsibilities with extensive teaching, Yosyp Hryhorovych mentored many young doctors, who subsequently became leading surgeons.

In the post-war period, Y. H. Turovets worked as a senior researcher at the Institute of Blood Transfusion and Emergency Surgery in Kyiv. From 1950, he was an associate professor in the Department of Faculty Surgery at the Kyiv Medical Institute, headed by Prof. A. P. Krymov. In 1951, Yosyp Hryhorovych defended his doctoral dissertation entitled «Acute

purulent complications of gunshot wounds to the hip joint». In 1953, he became a professor of the Department of Faculty Surgery at the Kyiv Medical Institute, serving as its head from 1954 to 1955. From 1956 to 1976, Prof. Turovets headed the Department of Surgery of the Sanitary and Hygienic Faculty at the Kyiv Medical Institute.

Yosyp Hryhorovych established a creative and friendly atmosphere within the department and clinic, characterised by professionalism, work discipline, ethical standards, unity, mutual support, and assistance among staff. He consistently demonstrated respect and care toward colleagues, students, and patients, generously sharing his knowledge and dedicating significant time to mentoring the next generation of medical professionals, particularly in surgery. Y. H. Turovets devoted special attention to clinical residents and young doctors, who regularly accompanied him during patient rounds, examinations, consultations, and surgical procedures. He often assisted them by performing some stages of surgical interventions, reflecting his excellence as a surgeon, teacher, and scientist. He was distinguished by his high erudition and exceptional technical proficiency in surgeries involving the abdominal cavity, chest, skull, thyroid gland, major blood vessels, and hematopoietic organs.

Yosyp Hryhorovych introduced novel approaches to the surgical treatment of stomach and duodenal ulcers, varicose veins of the lower extremities, gallbladder and intestinal diseases, and hernias. He also played a significant role in establishing modern anaesthesiology and advancing thyroid surgery.

Prof. Y. H. Turovets delivered lectures that incorporated the latest scientific achievements. In 1963, he released a full-length educational film titled «Alloplasty of Abdominal Hernias».

Between 1964 and 1966, several more educational films were produced, including «Necrosis», «Sclerotherapy of Varicose Veins of the Lower Extremities», and «Surgical Treatment of Goitre». These films were shown during lectures on corresponding surgical topics.

Yosyp Hryhorovych assembled a productive scientific team. Their planned research addressed important areas: potential anaesthesia in surgery, treatment of portal hypertension, surgical treatment of goitre, thrombophlebitis and its treatment, and prevention and treatment of paraproctitis. Over the years, the staff authored about 200 scientific papers.

Regular methodological meetings were conducted to discuss and approve methodological developments for each topic. Methodological guidelines for patient care and clinical training were established, and a comprehensive list of required clinical studies

for students was defined. Extensive teaching materials, including tables, slides, and diafilms, were produced for demonstrations in lectures and practical classes, which also featured patient demonstrations. Additional sources such as visual aids, a museum of macro preparations, and a biochemical laboratory were also created.

The international community of herniologists recognises Y. H. Turovets for introducing the term «herniology». He was the first to use this term in his 1965 article «Problems of Modern Herniology» in the journal «Clinical Surgery», where he described the current state of anterior abdominal wall hernia treatment. Under his supervision, five candidate dissertations and one doctoral dissertation were defended.

From 1976 to 1982, Yosyp Hryhorovych served as a professor-consultant. By that time, his wife had died, and they had no children. He spent his last years living modestly, alone, practically in oblivion.

Y. H. Turovets died in 1987 and was buried in Berkovtsy Cemetery.

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Y. P. Tsyura, M. S. Kryvopustov

Bogomolets National Medical University

Йосип Григорович Туровець — життя, присвячене хірургії

Ю. П. Цюра, М. С. Кривоустов

Національний медичний університет імені О. О. Богомольця, Київ

Стаття присвячена видатному хірургу, ученому й педагогу Йосипу Григоровичу Туровцю (1899—1987). Простежено його шлях від дитинства в селянській родині на Волині до професора Київського медичного інституту. Висвітлено роки навчання, клінічної ординатури та ранньої лікарської практики, де виявилися його організаторські здібності. Значну увагу приділено воєнному періоду: роботі в евакогоспіталях, участі в бойових кампаніях, науковому аналізу вогнепальних поранень судин і суглобів. Відзначено внесок Туровця в розвиток військово-польової хірургії, травматології та реконструктивних методик, а також створення оригінального травматологічного апарата. Представлено його науково-педагогічну діяльність у повоєнні роки, керівництво кафедрами, підготовку наукових кадрів, розробку нових хірургічних підходів і створення навчальних фільмів. Висвітлено роль ученого у впровадженні терміна «герніологія» та розвитку хірургії гриж. Зроблено висновок про вагомий внесок Й. Г. Туровця в українську і світову медицину, клінічну науку та медичну освіту.