

FROM HISTORY OF SURGERY

SIEGMUND HADDA (1882-1977) THE LAST HEAD-SURGEON CHIEF-SURGEON OF THE JEWISH HOSPITAL IN WROCŁAW

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In 1760, the Wrocław Chewra Kadisza (Sacred Brotherhood) organized a small hospital, called Hekdesz. Modern hospitals in Jewish communities are model after the Hekdesz throughout Europe. The hospital served as a charity institution and aided in the clinical treatment of patients. These patients were treated by one physician with an academic education and one “barber,” who performed the surgical procedures.

Based on the structure and form of existing philanthropic organizations in the Jewish community, a modern health care system, consistent with the time, was formed at the beginning of the XIXth century in Wrocław. The classical Hekdesz (ultimum refugium) was replaced by a modern hospital, which only focused on patient treatment, a change prompted by the emancipation of the Jewish Enlightenment-Haskali.

The first Jewish hospital in Wrocław was localized at Wallstraße street (currently known as -Włodkowica street). Based on different sources, the above-mentioned was a massive, three-story building. The first floor was comprised of 20 beds in three rooms for curable patients. Subjects with psychotic disturbances were isolated in one of the rooms localized in the attic of the building. Soon, the hospital became over-crowded and the chairman of the Wrocław Chewra Kadisz requested a separate building for psychotic (melancholic) patients, which would be localized on the grounds of the Jewish cemetery (Ohlauer Vorstadt). In spite of numerous complaints from physicians, due

to lack of suitable hygienic conditions and moisture, the hospital building survived on the grounds of the cemetery until the mid 19th century (1).

Over the course of time, the hospital at Włodkowica street also proved to be too small, due to the increasing Jewish community in Wrocław. This overcrowding was especially evident in 1831, with the cholera epidemic, when the hospital was unable to admit all infected patients. At that time, there were about 5000 Jews living in Wrocław (2).

On October 17th, 1838, Jonas Fränckl bought a parcel of land localized in the Jewish district at Saint Anthony’s street with the purpose of building a new hospital. During the next two years, the hospital was built, and on the basis of the powers of the Prussian king, named Fränckl (3). The hospital was opened on September 1th 1841.

The structure corresponded to contemporary standards of hospital buildings. Fränckl’s hospital consisted of two symmetrical, three-story buildings connected by lateral wings. The front of the building comprised the conference room, chapel (Betstube), and living quarters for the physician and administrative workers of the hospital. The hospital was localized in the out-building with space for 60 patients. Additionally, the above-mentioned also comprised the operating and delivery rooms, as well as the ritual bath.

Since the mid XIX century surgical procedures were only performed by academic surge-

ons, and not by surgical school graduates, which occurred previously (4). With permission from university authorities, the Director of the Surgical Department of the University of Wrocław was also Head of the Department of Surgery, Jewish Hospital. The first head of the department was professor Albrecht Middeldorph (1824-1868), followed by professor Hermann Bernhard Fischer (1831-1919), and in 1897-Carl Partsch (1854-1932). The last head of the department (October 1, 1890) was professor Jan Mikulicz (1850-1905) (5), until the closure of the hospital in 1903. Professor Mikulicz, a world-renowned surgeon, served as Director of the Department of Surgery, University of Wrocław. In comparison to the previous non-Jewish professors, Professor Mikulicz was highly interested in the fate of the Jewish Hospital. He not only planned the conception of the new hospital, but also trained future head of departments and used his influence to get them the post in the new hospital (6).

On April 27th 1903, the new Jewish Hospital was opened and considered one of the most modern hospitals of the times in Germany. At the beginning of the XXth century, the hospital possessed nearly 300 beds and was equipped with the most novel diagnostic methods, in accordance with medical technique progress. The hospital was built according to modern standards. Around the central, several-story main building, other smaller buildings were erected including the administration, outbuilding, morgue, infectious diseases building and boiler house. Apart from the outpatient clinics, which were localized in the administrative and infectious diseases building, all clinical departments, laboratory, and X-ray department were found in the main building (7). During the expansion of the hospital in 1914, the gynecological department was localized in a separate building. Additionally, a building for chronically diseased patients (Siechenhaus) was erected. Construction costs were covered by the Arnold and Hermann Schottländer's foundation (8).

At the time of opening, the hospital possessed the following departments: internal medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, and ophthalmology. During the following years, the profile of the hospital continued to expand. In 1919, the pediatrics department was opened. In 1928, the department of radiology opened and in 1932, the department of otorhinolaryngology opened.

Since the opening of the hospital, non-Jewish patients were also admitted, irrespective of their religious affiliation and financial conditions. Wealthy patients were usually hospitalized in single or double rooms (first and second class). Third class (multi-patient) was reserved for those insured by social welfare or the poor and homeless without insurance. The latter were financed by the Jewish community.

Considering the newly opened hospital, two primary physicians were employed, appointed by open competition, according to generally accepted qualification criteria. Additionally, the candidates were expected to possess knowledge and experience, as well as an academic title and scientific achievements (9).

Georg Reinbach (1872-1906), an associate professor, was the first head of the surgical department and a pupil of professor Mikulicz. Reinbach worked with Mikulicz since October 1th 1902 as Oberarzt (assistant-head of the department) in Fränckl's hospital. After the support of professor Mikulicz, he was appointed head of the department until his death on December 4th, 1906 (10).

Associate-professor Georg Gottstein (1868-1935) was his successor (a pupil of Mikulicz), an experienced surgeon and scientist, who established the reputation of the Jewish Hospital both in Germany and throughout the world (11, 12). He was a professor of Jewish descent, who lost his position after Hitler came to power and established the Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums law on April 7th, 1933 (13). However, he remained at the hospital working until March 5th, 1935. In 1935, Siegmund Hadda (1882-1977), a student of



Fig. 1. Main building of the new Jewish Hospital in Wrocław. View from the garden

Mikulicz and pupil of Gottstein, became the department head.

Siegmund Hadda was born in Cosel (Upper Silesia). He was brought up in a religious spirit. After moving to Siemianowice, the young Hadda went to middle school in Katowice and learned Polish. In 1901, he obtained his high-school diploma and began studying medicine at the University of Wrocław. After four semesters, he passed his initial exams (tentamen Physicum). During the fifth semester, he spent six months of training at the Department of Pathological Anatomy under professor Emil Ponfick's (1844-1913) direction (head of two departments). The second Department of Pathological Anatomy was localized in the oldest hospital in Wrocław (Hospital of all Saints), where professor Friedrich Henke (1868-1943) was dean and Hadda learned histopathology. He participated and eyewitnessed the development of Henke's scientific work: Mikroskopische Geschwulstbildung (Microscopic development of neoplasms). He listened to surgical lectures given by Gottstein, not imagining that the above-mentioned would be his future superior at the Jewish hospital, and he himself, his successor. Shortly thereafter, Hadda became Gottstein's private secretary, helping collect data for future scientific publications. At the time, he met Ferdynand Sauerbruch (1875-1951), Mikulicz's assistant, who was the first to perform investigations, which opened the way for the first thoracotomy using a low-pressure chamber (14).

In an article published after World War II (15), Hadda described his experience from listening to surgical lectures delivered by Mikulicz, which significantly influenced the remainder of his career. Reminiscing on the use of sterile overalls and a sterile mask over his nose and mouth in the operating room brought tears to his eyes. The above-mentioned conditions were introduced by Mikulicz in Wrocław for the first time in the world. Thus, he was able to observe the surgical artistry of professor Mikulicz, which significantly influenced his future. After obtaining his medical diploma in October 1905, he decided to specialize in surgery. If it were not for the premature death of professor Mikulicz (June 15th, 1905), he would probably have had the chance to be employed in his clinic. However, he began work at the Department of Surgery, Jewish Hospital in Wrocław, on December 24th, 1906, as a junior assi-

stant, not imagining that he would be the last head of the department and director of the hospital.

At the time when professor Gottstein was head of the Department of Surgery, the hospital was not only a service center, but also a scientific and medical training center, both for Jewish and Aryan descent physicians. One could closely observe and participate in the progress of surgery, represented by Gottstein. Hadda (16) described in his memoirs: "Als Arzt am Jüdischen Krankenhaus... (as a physician in the Jewish Hospital...)" the invented device, which could be used during bloodless gastric cardia dilatation in patients with achalasia (cardiospasmus), saving patients from cachexia and inevitable death.

Gottstein presented his investigation results during medical section meetings of the Schlesische Gesellschaft für vaterländische Cultur (Silesian Society of Homeland Culture) and Wrocław Society of Surgeons. The meetings were held at least once every year in the Jewish Hospital with participants from Wrocław, Lower Silesia and Poznań province. The above-mentioned ended when Hitler came to power (17).

Work usually lasted 14 hours every day with the responsibility of living in the hospital. Thus, young surgeons were expected professional dedications and married physicians were not employed.

Hadda trained in surgery and urology, endoscopic gastroenterology, as well as bronchoscopy, and cystoscopy. During a short period of time, he mastered diagnostic and operative techniques, was able to perform more difficult procedures, and substitute for Gottstein during his absence. As the most talented student of professor Gottstein, the board of the hospital appointed Hadda Oberarzt (assistant head of dept.) on January 1, 1910.

During his vacation in 1909, Hadda traveled to Paris and met with representatives of the French surgical society. The following vacations were spent in London, where he visited hospitals including the Saint Mary Hospital.

At the same time, Gottstein established contact with professor Willi Meyer, an excellent breast surgeon and asked him to help Hadda get in touch with American surgeons. The planned, three-month visit to the United States (1911) was possible with permission obtained from elders of the Jewish community. After ar-

living in New York, professor Meyer introduced Hadda to Franz Tork (1861-1938), an excellent surgeon from Wrocław, who facilitated the contact. Hadda was able to observe top-class operations performed at the German Hospital. Tork was highly interested in esophageal surgery. He explained the surgical method used in case of esophageal carcinoma of the thoracic segment (16). Because of the absence of such a patient, the planned surgical procedure was not performed. Shortly after his departure, Tork performed the above-mentioned procedure under endotracheal anesthesia (18). The 67-year old female patient, of Irish descent, survived for the following thirteen years.

In his memoirs, Hadda wrote that the greatest experience in New York was his stay at the Rockefeller Institute. He met professor Alexis Carrel (1873-1944), a future Noble prizewinner and excellent surgeon who took up tissue cultures. Hadda became acquainted with the methodology and continued tissue culture investigations upon his return to Wrocław. The obtained results were presented during the medical section of the Silesian Society of Homeland Culture (16).

He then traveled to Boston (Massachusetts-Hospital), where he became acquainted with



Fig. 2. Siegmund Hadda MD, PhD

modern documentation and system of records comprising most important data from medical histories, laboratory results, course of operations and treatment results. Afterwards, he traveled to Cleveland/Ohio to professor George Cril, and heard music for the very first time in the operating room during the beginning of anesthesia. At the end of his stay in America he visited the Mayo Clinic (Rochester, Minnesota), where physicians from all over the world flocked. Just as a reminder, William J. Mayo and Charles H. Mayo were pupils of Mikulicz in Wrocław at the end of the 19th century (14). Hadda's stay in America strengthened his position in Wrocław. He continued to publish and work with the thought of a future academic career.

After marrying Hertha (maiden name-Schlesinger), his daughter Eve was born. Since the salary of an Oberarzt was insufficient and he had no other sources of income, with permission of Gottstein he opened his own surgical practice in 1914.

After the outbreak of World War I, on August 2th, 1914 Hadda joined the army and became head of the surgical departments of the field hospitals in Wrocław. One of the above-mentioned was organized in Saint Joseph's Hospital (after 1945 – Czerwiakowski hospital) for wounded soldiers and the other (Augusta Krankenhaus) for wounded officers. Work in both field hospitals was exhausting. Nevertheless, he continued to operate on his patients in the private clinic (16). Thus, in spite of the economic crisis, he was able to provide for and educate his three children: Eve, Lotta and George.

Hadda was not interested in politics. He did not belong to any political party. As a Jew, he was no Zionist, rather a German of Jewish beliefs. He observed the people surrounding him noting initial reluctance followed by the hostility of non-Jewish physicians.

After the Nazi's came to power, the Jewish Hospital in Wrocław became the central institution for physicians fired from the public health care system. From October 1 1938, physicians of Jewish descent were prohibited to practice medicine. With permission from the Internal Affairs Ministry, the above-mentioned could only temporarily treat Jewish patients (Krankenbehandler).

Under threat of strict punishment, the Jewish Hospital could not admit Aryans. On the

other hand, Aryans could not benefit from Jewish medical help. When Hadda became head of the department of surgery, he secretly operated on Aryan patients (16), which the Gestapo did not notice. This was possible until 1937. Afterwards, a Gestapo member was always present in the emergency room of the hospital and controlled everyone and everything.

On June 25th 1938, SA fighters forced their way into the homes of Jewish citizens arresting several hundreds of Jews and transported them to the Buchenwald concentration camp. After four weeks, they were released in terrible psychiatric condition with suppurating wounds (battered), extensive phlegmonous wounds, and urine retention. Hadda could not resign to the thought that the above-mentioned crimes would be observed regularly and systematically in the future.

In mid-August, 1938 Hadda traveled to England in reference to his own migration. He was treated with refined courtesy, but did not obtain permission to remain in England. However, he was able to obtain permission for the migration of his three children.

As I mentioned before, Jewish physicians were deprived of the possibility to practice medicine in 1938. To become a *Krankenbehandler* depended on the amount of Jewish community members (16). Hadda, head of the department of surgery, possessed such permission and thus continued to operate in the Jewish Hospital (16).

Hadda wrote in his memoirs of the night from November 9/10th 1938. The day after the "cristal" night the Jewish Hospital had a full hand of work. Patients were continuously brought in and many after suicide attempts. All were battered and bruised and in severe conditions. That same night two members of the SS came to his house, searching for his son who luckily found shelter in a Christian family.

In November, 1938 the Lower Silesia Chamber of Physicians nominated Hadda to the function of *Verantwortlicher für das jüdische Sanitätswesen Schlesiens*. After the migration of professor Ludwig Guttman (1899-1980), director of the Jewish Hospital in Wrocław, Hadda became the general hospital physician. Thus, he was continuously summoned by the Gestapo. He was required to report on the activities of the Jewish Hospital, especially during massive arrests of Jews. Every Monday morning he had to turn up at the Chamber of

Physicians reporting on eventual hospital staff changes during the past week. The official (16) of the Chamber of Physicians tried to facilitate the life of hospital physicians, in spite of recently joining the NSDAP. Thanks to the above-mentioned official, Hadda's son was saved.

On the morning of August 14th, 1939 Hadda once again reported before the above-mentioned official. During the conversation one could hear the noise of tanks rumbling through the street. Mr. K (Hadda did not give the full name) looked out the window and said: "do you see those tanks, it is the time of war, what will happen to your son?" and he knew that Hadda's son worked for his father as a voluntary. He continued "he should be removed from Germany; no one knows what the Nazi's will do with the young" (16). Fortunately, prior to the beginning of the war, Hadda received a letter from England permitting his son to migrate. All traveling documents were hastily prepared and George left for England before the outbreak of the war, where his two sisters resided.

On August 29th 1939, doctor Hadda was summoned by the head of the Gestapo, who announced "that he must clear out the hospital until August 31th, 1939", and "if the hospital will not be vacated before the first gunshot, both you and the administrative director will be sent to the concentration camp". When asked what should become of the hospitalized patients, he said: "they should be allocated in villas inhabited by Jews, localized in the southern district of Wrocław".

A board meeting was immediately called and it was decided that patients be transferred to the Jewish hospital for chronically diseased (*Siechenhaus*). The hospital also employed Jewish physicians who took care of the remaining 5000 Jews in Wrocław.

The substitute hospital did not possess an operating room and patients had to wait for months, prior to surgical intervention. Accidentally, Hadda found out that the old, twelve-room private clinic with two operating rooms was empty. The official from the Jewish department helped in obtaining permission from the Gestapo to transfer all surgical patients from the *Siechenhaus* hospital, thus, leaving space for other patients. Since the end of September 1939, the Jewish Hospital in Wrocław was composed of two separate departments. The Department of Internal Medicine was localized in the *Siechenhaus* hospital at *Sudecka* street,

while the Department of Surgery was located in the previously mentioned private clinic.

The above-mentioned situation did not last for long. At the end of November 1939, the Siechenhaus hospital was also requisitioned by the army. The Department of Internal medicine was transferred to the administrative building of the Jewish community and patients were placed in the old Jewish school. The surgical department in the private clinic was too small. With permission obtained from the Gestapo, everyone was transferred to a larger private clinic, which could hold 40 beds, comprising a spacious operating room, laboratory and comfortable kitchen. The X-ray room and additional beds were organized. Considering such conditions, doctor Hadda ran the 72-bed surgical department until November 1942. During the above-mentioned period, he only operated on severely injured patients, transported from concentration camps in the vicinity of Wrocław, mostly Poles. In selected cases, ambulatory treatment was performed under police supervision (16).

On November 21th, 1941 doctor Hadda and his wife Hertha were arrested. Several days following the intervention of the Jewish community, both were released. After returning to the hospital Hadda noted that half of his personnel had been deported. His 53-year old brother Moritz was also deported and murdered near Ryga, Latvia (16).

Patients that were unable to travel and the elderly were the only subjects that remained in the Jewish Hospital. Near the end of 1942, the surgical department was requisitioned by the army. A search for a new place for the surgical department was initiated. Several buildings that belonged to the Jewish Community were adopted, localized at Włodkowica street until the deportation of the last patient on June 10th, 1943. The above-mentioned date symbolized the end of the Jewish Hospital in Wrocław. One hundred and sixty one remaining patients were transported to the concentration camp in Theresienstadt (16, 19). Hadda wrote, "On June 16 1943, Theresienstadt received the last 18 Jews living in Wrocław, who coexisted with a non-Jewish partner (mixed marriages), including hospital board and Jewish community members, remaining hospital staff, my wife and me".

In Theresienstadt, he learned that his father died on May 1th, 1943 and was deported in April from the old persons home for Jewish citizens. Doctor Hadda thought that the same

would happen to him. That was not the case. He was able to practice at the camp hospital and regained independence with his wife after 20 months of hard labor. Parole from the camp was owed to the following campaign: "exchange of humans for trucks", organized by count Folke Bernadotte (1895-1948) near the end of the war, in the name of the Swedish Red Cross (17), approved by Heinrich Himmler (1900-1945).

Doctor Springer was head of the surgical department in the camp hospital, as previous assistant professor at the Department of Surgery in the University Hospital, Prague. When he became aware of the presence of doctor Hadda, he immediately proposed cooperation. Surgical procedures were performed every day, especially emergency cases, such as intestinal obstruction and incarcerated hernias. A number of the above-mentioned cases increased, due to progressive cachexia associated with malnutrition. During the last three months of 1944, the number of patients significantly decreased. Out of the 65000 Jewish imprisoned in Theresienstadt, only 20% remained at the turn of 1944/1945. After every visit of SS Obersturmbannführer Adolf Eichmann (responsible for the transport of Jews for extermination), the number of patients significantly decreased. Hadda saw Eichmann for the very last time on November 1944 (16).

On February 3, 1945 he heard of the transport of Jewish citizens to Switzerland. Nobody wanted to believe such revelations. Near midnight on February 4th 1945 he was suddenly awakened with an inquiry about whether he would travel with his wife to Switzerland. Most of the prisoners did not believe the chief of the camp. The transport was planned for 6000 prisoners, but only 1600 reported including Siegmund and Hertha Hadda. The transport was by train through the south of Germany and prior to passing the Swiss border, the prisoners were asked to remove the Jewish star from their clothes (20). On February 7th, 1945, they crossed the border and happily kissed Swiss land. The above-mentioned was the last and only, since Hitler did not consent to future transports (17).

Following a short episode in Switzerland and England with his children and grandchildren, he migrated with his wife to the United States, where he remained for the rest of his life. He nostrificated his diploma in New York City, and in spite of 65 years of age was allowed by

the board to work as a surgeon. He practiced for the following fifteen years.

On October 13th 1977, his wife Hertha died. Seven years later, after his 95-th birthday, the

last head of the department of the Jewish Hospital in Wrocław closed his eyes for the last time and was buried at the cemetery in Crew Garden, New York (20).

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Received: 17.01.2007 r.

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