

Cherniakhivskiy Yevhen Hryhorovych: a surgeon, brilliant lecturer, and teacher

The life and career of Professor Yevhen Hryhorovych Cherniakhivskiy, a surgeon and scientist and the first rector of Kyiv Medical Institute (now Bogomolets National Medical University).

The goal of medicine is action, not waiting.
Claude Bernard



This epigraph best describes Yevhen Cherniakhivskiy's personality: a man of action in all areas, with the greatest intelligence and outlook.

He held various highly-esteemed titles throughout his career, including surgeon, doctor of medicine (1911), professor (1918), head of the department of general surgery (1921–1922), head of the department of faculty surgery (1923–1929), and first director of Kyiv Medical Institute (1920–1921).

Yevhen Hryhorovych Cherniakhivskiy was born on February 1, 1873, in the family of the parish priest Hryhorii Cherniakhivskiy in the village of Mazepyn-tsi, Vasylkivskiy District, Kyiv Province (now Bilotserkivskiy District, Kyiv Region).

Yevhen Hryhorovych received his secondary education at Kyiv Gymnasium No. 3, situated in Podil. Upon completing his studies at the gymnasium, he entered the medical faculty of St. Volodymyr University. Throughout his time as a student, he actively participated in the university's student scientific society. In 1898, he graduated from the university with a doctor's degree. Mykola Markiiianovych Volkovych was in charge of the surgical department at the Oleksandriv Hospital in Kyiv when Yevhen

Hryhorovych started working there as an intern. Upon finishing his internship in 1901, he assumed the position of a freelance resident and head of the surgical infectious department at the same hospital.

Y. H. Cherniakhivskiy had a long-standing relationship with M. M. Volkovych. He took over as head of the department, replacing his teacher, after working together for 12 years. He also became the secretary of the newly established Kyiv Society of Surgeons.

Y. H. Cherniakhivskiy conducted a series of scientific studies on experimental surgery in the laboratory of the Department of General Pathology at Kyiv University.

It should be noted that during the 20s and 30s of the 20th century, the field of scientific medicine experienced a significant shift towards an experimental and physiological approach. It involved the extensive use of physiological and biochemical methods in clinical practice.

In 1903, Y. H. Cherniakhivskiy headed the surgical department of the Oleksandriv Hospital, succeeding his mentor, M. M. Volkovych. Between 1903 and 1904, he performed a total of 554 surgical procedures, which involved operating on various organs of the abdominal cavity as well as the heart and blood vessels. The surgeries addressed tumours, injuries, and other related issues. The outcomes of surgical intervention were satisfactory for that time, with postoperative mortality at 13.5% and overall mortality at 8.0%.

The scientist placed significant emphasis on properly monitoring the highest level of asepsis, despite the challenging conditions prevailing at that time.

Although the university studies and the hospital service were fully russified, Yevhen Hryhorovych managed to nurture the Ukrainian language and actively participated in Ukrainian cultural events.

In 1906, the Ukrainian Scientific Society (USS) was established in Kyiv. At that time, he joined it as a member and actively took part in making reports on surgical topics in Ukrainian. Additionally, he contributed scientific articles to the «Collection of the Medical Section of the USS», which were among the earliest surgical scientific and medical publications in Ukrainian in Naddniproshchyna.

After the collapse of the Russian Empire during the Ukrainian National Revolution, Yevhen Cherniakhivskiy took an active part in the creation of the Ukrainian state and was among the organisers and participants of the first Ukrainian Medical Society in Kyiv, which later turned into the All-Ukrainian Union of Doctors. «Ukrainian Medical News» of July 20, 1918, reported on the II All-Ukrainian Congress of Doctors.

In August 1918, Yevhen Hryhorovych played a key role in establishing the first Ukrainian medical faculty in Kyiv. He was appointed a professor and organised the Department of Clinical Surgery, the first Ukrainian surgical department at the Faculty of Medicine. In 1923–1924, he published a valuable two-volume scientific manual, «Surgical Pathology and Therapy». The work comprehensively addressed the principles of wounds, antiseptics and aseptics, and other relevant issues in the field of general surgery. Professor Yevhen Cherniakhivskiy made a significant contribution to the advancement of Ukrainian medicine and surgery by publishing the first textbook on surgery in the Ukrainian language.

An important milestone in the development of the higher medical school occurred in 1931 with the publication of the «Practical Dictionary of Medical Terminology», a Russian-Ukrainian dictionary that was compiled on the initiative and under the editorship of Yevhen Hryhorovych. Regrettably, the dictionary was subsequently eliminated from libraries due to its classification as «nationalist literature».

In 1923–1924, Professor Yevhen Cherniakhivskiy delivered lectures to students at the Department of Faculty Surgery. He introduced numerous innovations to teaching clinical surgery, and he was renowned for his exceptional skills as a lecturer and teacher. He improved the educational and pedagogical processes as well as the methodology of teaching surgery. Under his guidance, private docents at the Department of Faculty Surgery designed and taught courses on surgical diagnostics, abdominal surgery, research methods for surgical patients, and children's surgery.

Y.H. Cherniakhivskiy held numerous managerial positions throughout his life: head of the department of general and faculty surgery, chief physician of the Oleksandrivska Hospital (twice), secretary of

the Association of Surgeons of Kyiv and Kyiv Region, one of the founders of the Ukrainian State University, head of the surgery department of the Oleksandrivska hospital, and the first director of the medical institute.

Yevhen Hryhorovych described his affiliation with the Kyiv Medical Institute: «The second institution with which my life and work are closely connected is the Kyiv Medical Institute. In my twentieth year, quite unexpectedly for me, I was appointed rector of the Kyiv Medical Institute. I was the rector for something like 16 months and the vice-rector for the educational part for a little less than a year. After that, I did not quit this intense administrative work, the work on the construction of the medical institute, but continued to work in various commissions, both scientific and methodological and economic, forming the new foundations of the Kyiv Medical Institute. I can proudly say that I took part in the construction of the modern Kyiv Medical Institute, sparing neither my strength nor my health. As a result of this intense, nervous work, during the operation, my illness happened ...».

The fact that Y.H. Cherniakhivskiy preserved the Ukrainian language in teaching — along with a group of professors and teachers and numerous students who made up the so-called «Ukrainian lecture», which existed until 1925 — is one of his many accomplishments as rector. An intriguing fact, substantiated by an archival document, is that Yevhen Hryhorovych, while serving as the director of the medical institute, formally requested the local or central authorities to assign one of the Kyiv hospitals to the medical institute with the intention of establishing a «university clinic».

Researchers have very limited knowledge about the life of Yevhen Cherniakhivskiy throughout the 1930s. After his dismissal from work, numerous attempts to discredit his family in the media and among colleagues, as well as a sentence of conditional imprisonment, resulted in the prohibition of his name. Including Yevhen Hryhorovych's name in memoirs or historical references posed a personal risk for the authors.

The name of the outstanding scientist and surgeon, who served as the first rector of the Kyiv Medical Institute (now Bogomolets National Medical University), has been reintroduced into the modern history of Ukrainian medicine. The first information about Yevhen Cherniakhivskiy appeared in Vasyl Pliushch's book, «Medical Science in Ukraine in the First Half of the 20th Century» [3].

The declassified documents reveal that in 1931, Professor Yevhen Hryhorovych Cherniakhivskiy was involved in the Vesna agency case, which entailed counter-revolutionary activities.

The ultimate outcome of this criminal case is not known. Nevertheless, it is clear that those years were very difficult for Yevhen Hryhorovych and his family. He died in 1938 in complete oblivion, at the age of 65. In 2000, the employees of the department found out that Yevhen Cherniakhivsky and his wife, Lidia Oleksandrivna, were buried at the Lukianivskyi cemetery in 1938.

Yaroslav Ganitkevych conducted a rather deep analysis of the surgical works and activities of the scientist in his article «Yevhen Cherniakhivskyi, the founder of the Ukrainian national surgical school» [1]. Yaroslav Ganitkevych expressed his belief that it is imperative to restore the recognition of Yevhen Hryhorovych Cherniakhivskyi in the history of Ukrainian and world medicine.

This essay can be summarised with the statement by D.E. Dubenko: «When compiling an imaginary curriculum vitae of a professor, one gets the

impression that Yevhen Hryhorovych managed to live the life of at least ten people, despite the fact that on his professional path he was constantly harassed by the current regimes and lived the last 10 years of his life in unjust oblivion and isolation».

REFERENCES

1. Ganitkevych Y. Yevhen Chernyakhivskyi, the founder of the Ukrainian national surgical school. *Medical Herald*. Chicago. 1996;2(139):112-117.
2. Malyuta OV. Pioneer of Ukrainian national surgery Yevgeny Chernyakhivskyi. *Scientific Bulletin of the O. O. Bogomolets National Medical University*. 2013;(2):115-9. Ukrainian.
3. Pliushch V. *Medical Science in Ukraine in the First Half of the 20th Century. Materials for the History of Ukrainian Medicine*. New York: Munich, 1975;1:9-150.
4. Tovkun L. Professor E.H. Chernyakhivskyi — a scientist, teacher, founder of the Ukrainian surgical school. *Pereyaslavskyi litopis*. 2011;(2):174-9. Ukrainian.
5. Vilenskyi Y. Feats and drama of surgeon Chernyakhivskyi: the man who was the first in Kyiv to perform heart surgery. *Day*. 2007;(11):6. Ukrainian.

**L. G. Zavernyi, T. V. Tarasiuk,
Y. P. Tsiura, M. S. Kryvopustov**

Bogomolets National Medical University, Kyiv

Черняхівський Євген Григорович — хірург, блискучий лектор і педагог

Л. Г. Заверний, Т. В. Тарасюк, Ю. П. Цюра, М. С. Кривопустов

Національний медичний університет імені О. О. Богомольця, Київ

Висвітлено життєвий та професійний шлях професора Євгена Григоровича Черняхівського — вченого-хірурга, першого ректора Київського медичного інституту (нині — Національний медичний університет імені О. О. Богомольця).

FOR CITATION

■ Zavernyi LG, Tarasiuk TV, Tsiura YP, Kryvopustov MS. Cherniakhivskyi Yevhen Hryhorovych: a surgeon, brilliant lecturer, and teacher. *General Surgery (Ukraine)*. 2023;3-4:5-7. <http://doi.org/10.30978/GS-2023-3-5>.