



PROFESSOR A.Ya. DAMSKY – AN UROLOGIST-INNOVATOR AND A TEACHER (THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS BIRTH)

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✎ The article is devoted to the 150th anniversary of the birth of Professor Albert Yakovlevich Damsky who was an urologist-innovator and a teacher. The main stages of scientific and pedagogical activity and practical activity of the scientist are presented. A.Ya. Damsky published about 60 scientific papers, also he was the author of the first two Soviet urology textbooks and a creator of an operating cystoscope of his own design. Moreover he was the first to perform transvesical adenectomy.

✎ **Keywords:** A.Ya. Damsky; transvesical prostatectomy; operative cystoscope.

ПРОФЕССОР А.Я. ДАМСКИЙ — УРОЛОГ-НОВАТОР И ПЕДАГОГ (К 150-ЛЕТИЮ СО ДНЯ РОЖДЕНИЯ)

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✎ Статья посвящена 150-летию со дня рождения профессора Альберта Яковлевича Дамского, уролога-новатора и педагога. Представлены основные этапы научно-педагогической деятельности и практической деятельности ученого. А.Я. Дамский опубликовал около 60 научных работ, был автором двух первых советских учебников по урологии, создал операционный цистоскоп собственной конструкции и первым начал выполнять чрезпузырную аденомэктомию.

✎ **Ключевые слова:** А.Я Дамский; чрезпузырная аденомэктомия; операционный цистоскоп.

The 150th anniversary of the birth of the famous Russian scientist, surgeon, and urologist, Professor Albert Yakovlevich Damsky was in the year 2018 (Fig. 1). Work of the Professor A.Ya. Damsky as a scientist and doctor was based on his comprehensive knowledge, clear clinical focus, and profound theoretical awareness in various fields of medicine. The quotation by N.G. Chernyshevsky corresponds to A.Ya. Damsky: “We have quite a lot of hardworking researchers, but there are few people

who would deserve in all fairness the name of outstanding scientists, because not only diligence and scholarship are required for this, but also special intellectual power, breadth and mental grasp, and combination of too many and too rare traits.”

A.Ya. Damsky was talented, original, highly individual, and therefore unique. This was manifested primarily in his ability as a scientist to formulate a new question unexpectedly on a particular problem, so that the formulation was quite legitimate,

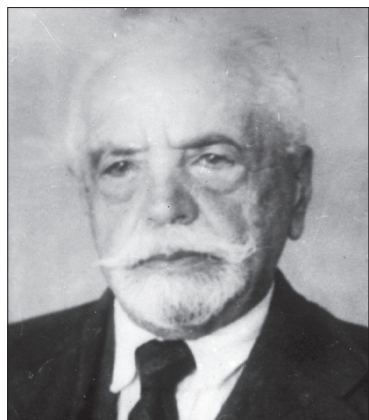


Fig. 1. Professor A.Ya. Damsky (1868–1949)

Рис. 1. Профессор А.Я. Дамский (1868–1949)



Fig. 2. Smolensk State Medical University in the 1920–1930

Рис. 2. Смоленский медицинский институт в 1920–1930-е гг.

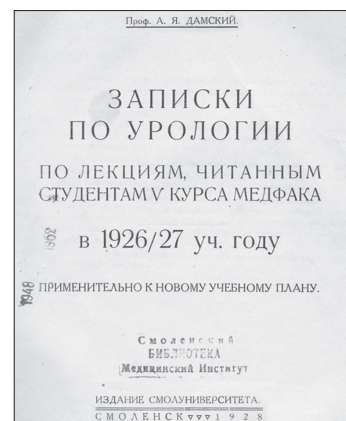


Fig. 3. Collection of lectures for students written by Professor A.Ya. Damsky "Notes on Urology"

Рис. 3. Сборник лекций для студентов профессора А.Я. Дамского «Записки по урологии»

and often deeper and more correct than the generally accepted one, however, one that for some reason was not suspected or supposed before Damsky advanced it. Quite often in such cases, the "urgency" of the question is mentioned.

A.Ya. Damsky was born on May 30, 1868 in Vilno (today it is Vilnius, the capital and largest city of Lithuania). In 1888, he graduated from the gymnasium No. 1 in Vilna. In 1893, A.Ya. Damsky graduated from the Faculty of Medicine of Kazan University with a medal for a competitive work in surgery on the topic "On the history of materials for sutures and ligatures in tissues and cavities of a living body." In 1895, A.Ya. Damsky was employed as an extra-staff resident physician of the faculty therapeutic clinic in Warsaw, where he studied diseases of the kidneys and urinary tract, and investigated the diagnostic value of general urine analysis. In 1897, he was employed as a staff resident physician of this clinic and sent on a business trip abroad to advance his scientific knowledge and practical skills. A.Ya. Damsky worked in the Vienna clinics of Professor Frisch and Professor Zuckerkindl, the clinic of Professor Guyon in Paris, and then in Berlin, he studied cystoscopy and catheterization of the ureters with the world famous professors M. Nitze and L. Kasper [1].

Returning from abroad, A.Ya. Damsky engaged with urological issues only. He was the head of the urological outpatient clinic that was opened in Warsaw, and then changed to the surgical clinic of the University of Warsaw, where he worked mainly in the field of surgical urology until 1904. During the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), he served as

a regimental doctor. A.Ya. Damsky gave a course of lectures on cystoscopy and ureteral catheterization at the Higher Women's Medical Courses in St. Petersburg from 1907 to 1913. From 1913 to 1914, he worked in Warsaw and took an active part in the publication of an international urological journal in the German language, where he wrote an abstract of all Russian urological medicine [2].

A.Ya. Damsky operated on urological patients in military hospitals during the First World War. From 1918 to 1921, Albert Yakovlevich was the chief physician of the evacuation hospital in Vitebsk, and then in Smolensk. After demobilization, he was appointed senior physician of the Smolensk Provincial Hospital No. 1, at the same time he was the head of the urological department and held this position until he was elected to the Department of Urology of the Medical Faculty (thereafter institute) of Smolensk University (1921). Professor A.Ya. Damsky headed the Department of Urology of the Smolensk Medical Institute from 1921 to 1949 (Fig. 2).

Being an assiduous researcher and talented organizer, Albert Yakovlevich devoted a lot of effort and energy to the development of urology in Russia. He was the founder of one of the first departments of urology in the country (at that time, only the Moscow University and the Military Medical Academy in Petrograd had urology departments), and was a consistent supporter of compulsory teaching of urology in medical schools [3].

Professor A.Ya. Damsky developed an operating cystoscope of his own design [4]; he was the first in Russia to perform transvesical adenomectomy [5].



Fig. 4. Professor A.Ya. Damsky in the surgical dressing room
Рис. 4. Профессор А.Я. Дамский в перевязочной



Fig. 5. Employees of the urology department of Smolensk State Medical University together with Professor A.Ya. Damsky
Рис. 5. Сотрудники кафедры урологии Смоленского медицинского института вместе с профессором А.Я. Дамским

Albert Yakovlevich is widely known in the world of medicine as the author of 60 scientific papers and the first textbooks on urology [3]. A number of his works focused on the treatment of gonorrhea and renal tuberculosis (Fig. 3). The scientific publications such as “Catheterization of the ureters and radiography as a recognition method for various surgical diseases of the kidneys and urinary tract” (“Vrachebnaya Gazeta,” 1905), “The author’s new operating cystoscope” (Proceedings of the Petersburg Urological Society, 1913) [4], “Transvesical prostatectomy based on 60 own cases” (Proceedings of the I All-Russian Congress of Urologists, 1925) are of particular interest [5]. A.Ya. Damsky reviewed the monograph by L.I. Dunaevsky “Hypertrophy of the prostate” and the textbook by R.M. Fronshtein “Surgical urology” [6].

A.Ya. Damsky’s basic principles in teaching were an uncompromising attitude to dogmatism, a deep philosophical substantiation of theory and practice, a deep understanding of social and biological processes, and compulsory interaction with his trainees – students and young doctors. He attached importance to the timbre of his voice, the “artistic impression” of presentation, the personality of the lecturer in general, and humor, made him rarely published his lectures. All this, according to the scientist, disappears when written on paper. Albert Yakovlevich did not “broadcast” while giving lectures, but held a conversation with the audience, paused, asked questions as if to himself, giving the audience the opportunity to concentrate and think, then he answered the question himself; sometimes expressed controversial points of view, reflecting his scientific

disputes with opponents, continuing aloud the search for truth.

Professor A.Ya. Damsky enjoyed incontestable authority among his colleagues (Fig. 4). He gave a lot of specific advice on how to organize work in order to achieve success in scientific, pedagogical, and practical activities. Moreover, A.Ya. Damsky was very careful about the individuality of his students. He trained a large “team” of urologists who worked, and some are still working in various parts of Russia (Fig. 5). His versatile fruitful activity as a clinician and scientist contributed significantly to the development of Russian urology. Albert Yakovlevich Damsky died on May 17, 1949 and was buried at the Klinok cemetery in Smolensk (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6. Grave of Professor A.Ya. Damsky in Smolensk
Рис. 6. Могила профессора А.Я. Дамского в Смоленске

The personality of Professor A.Ya. Damsky as a scientist was presented by elements that are often inherent in other scientists, but in him these qualities were “cemented” by rare personal characteristics of an original and profound thinker, brilliant polemicist, and a talented teacher. The life of A.Ya. Damsky in science is a remarkable and convincing example of the decisive and central role played by an outstanding personality in the progress of various fields of research.

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