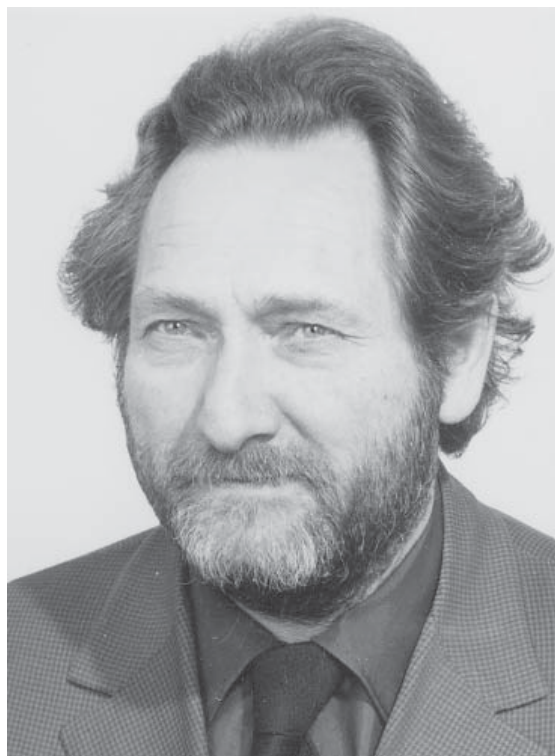


In memoriam



Prof. Witold Drabikowski

Witold Drabikowski (1925–1983), a great scientist, founder of the Department of Muscle Biochemistry at the Nencki Institute of Experimental Biology in Warsaw and creator of the Polish school of muscle biochemistry. He was a man of comprehensive mind and great humanistic knowledge, with extremely wide scientific interest, passion for science, exceptional energy and vitality. He knew how to combine seemingly unrelated conclusions, how to benefit from exchange of ideas and proper use of new theories, discoveries and methods. Moreover, he knew how to build and uphold interest in and enthusiasm for research among his coworkers and students. His research was always at the forefront of world muscle science, which certainly was the result of his personal skills, his desire for continuous learning, and the high scientific standards he set to himself and his coworkers. His research papers despite being published more than two decades ago are still cited. He was active member of numerous Polish and international scientific societies and organisations. He certainly was a model forerunner of scientific integration in Europe.

Maria Gabriela Sarzała-Drabikowska (1936–1987) was head of the Laboratory of Biomembranes of Contractile Cells at the Nencki Institute. She was a world-wide recognized expert in the structure of membranes in muscle cells and their function under normal and pathological conditions, as well as in phospholipid metabolism and calmodulin-regulated



Prof. Gabriela Sarzała-Drabikowska

enzymes. Prof. Drabikowska is remembered as a teacher devoted to her students whom she guided with great care and responsibility.

The couple had a tremendous impact on scientific lives of many then young Polish scientists, and most of the Drabikowskis' former students and coworkers have established successful careers in Poland and abroad. They carry out research at the cutting edge related to muscle, calcium-binding proteins and biological membranes, following in the steps of their Mentors.

The scientific session "Muscle and cell motility: from cell physiology to human pathology" was organized in Warsaw on 5th and 6th of November 2004 to honor the memory of Prof. Witold Drabikowski and his wife Prof. Gabriela Sarzała-Drabikowska. The organizers were Prof. Irena Hausmanowa-Petrusewicz from the Committee of Neuromuscular Pathology, Polish Academy of Sciences, and Ass. Prof. Anna Jakubiec-Puka and Ass. Prof. Maria Jolanta Rędownicz from the Department of Muscle Biochemistry at the Nencki Institute of Experimental Biology in Warsaw. Former collaborators, friends, colleagues and students of Witold Drabikowski and his wife Gabriela were invited from all over the world to present their current research and acknowledge their scientific heritage. And many of them, despite their numerous engagements, did find the time to come to Warsaw and participate in the session.

The session was divided in the two parts: the scientific one at the Mossakowski Institute of Experimental Medicine on Friday, November 5th, and the informal one at the Nencki Institute on the following day. The Friday session speakers were Professors: Irena Hausmanowa-Petrusewicz together with her collaborators Anna Fidziańska and Irena Niebrój-Dobosz from the Mossakowski Institute of Experimental Medicine (Poland), John Gergely and Zenon Grabarek from the Boston Biomedical Research Institute (USA), Reinhardt Ruedel from the University of Ulm (Germany), Ernesto Carafoli from the Venetian Institute of Molecular Medicine in Padova (Italy), Felix M. Goñi from the University of Bilbao (Spain), Marek Michalak from the University of Alberta in Edmonton (Canada), Hanna Brzeska from the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, NIH in Bethesda (USA), and from the Nencki Institute: Hanna Strzelecka-Gołaszewska, Anna Jakubiec-Puka, Jacek Kuźnicki (also the director of the International Institute of Molecular and Cellular Biology, PAS in Warsaw), Sławomir Piłkuła and Dr. Antoni Wrzosek. In this session also participated the only son of Witold and Gabriela, Dr. Krzysztof Drabikowski, who is working now at the University of Freiburg (Germany). Opening remarks were given by Irena Hausmanowa-Petrusewicz who briefly — in a very emotional manner — reminded Witold and Gabriela. More details about the lives of Witold Drabikowski and Maria Gabriela Sarzała-Drabikowska were presented by Hanna Strzelecka-Gołaszewska who was Witold's first PhD student and Sławomir Piłkuła, former PhD student of Gabriela. In addition, the reminiscence letter sent by Prof. Samuel V. Perry (University of Birmingham, UK), a close friend of Witold Drabikowski, was read. During the session the speakers discussed the most recent views on the mechanisms of regulation of muscle contraction (J. Gergely, Z. Grabarek, H. Strzelecka-Gołaszewska, A. Wrzosek) as well as of nonmuscle systems function (H. Brzeska, J. Kuźnicki, M. Michalak, K. Drabikowski). Studies concerning possible mechanisms of neuromuscular pathology

were presented as well (A. Fidziańska, I. Niebrój-Dobosz together with I. Hausmanowa-Petrusewicz, A. Jakubiec-Puka and R. Ruedel). Finally, membrane-binding proteins (E. Carafoli, S. Piłkuła) and plasma membrane microdomains (F.M. Goñi) were discussed. Researchers and physicians from several Warsaw research and medical institutions as well as many guests from other Polish cities (Wrocław, Bydgoszcz, Łódź) actively participated in the session, including former research technicians working with Witold and Gabriela.

The Saturday session was much less formal. The speakers were the same as in the Friday session and in addition many friends of Witold and Gabriela, including Prof. Leszek Kuźnicki (former President of PAS) who knew Witold since their university times, and Witold's son from his first marriage (Marek) and grandson (Michał). During the open discussion all the participants shared their memories, reminded many anecdotes and situations that affected their lives, indicating how much they owe to both Drabikowskis. Everybody agreed that Witold's and Gabriela's contribution to muscle biochemistry and Polish science was of exceptional calibre. Prof. Carafoli reminded that it was Prof. Drabikowski who proposed the idea of organizing and in fact organized the first international meeting on calcium-binding proteins held in Jabłonna/Warsaw in 1973; he also played an important role in the development and activities of the European Muscle Club. He managed to do all that during the difficult time of the Cold War, when there was shortage of equipment, reagents, international exchange and scholarships.

It was a great tragedy that they died so early. To make tribute to their memory, in this issue of *Acta Biochimica Polonica* we publish eight articles by Prof. Drabikowski's and Prof. Sarzała-Drabikowska's former coworkers, students and friends.

Maria Jolanta Rędownicz,
head of the Department of Muscle Biochemistry and
Sławomir Piłkuła,
head of the Laboratory of Biochemistry of Lipids,
Department of Cellular Biochemistry at the Nencki Institute of Experimental Biology, Warsaw

Warsaw, May 19th, 2005