

## Andrzej Maciejczak (1960-2025)

It is with great sadness and a sense of great loss that we bid farewell to Professor Andrzej Maciejczak, an outstanding scientist and academic teacher, a valued neurosurgeon and a wonderful physician. He passed away on March 15, 2025 at the age of 64.



Professor Andrzej Maciejczak, PhD, was born in Starachowice on July 8, 1960. He studied at the 9th Jarosław Dąbrowski High School in Łódź. He showed great promise as a karate fighter and athlete—a runner and high jumper. However, he had always dreamed of medicine, although he became a neurosurgeon somewhat by accident. Initially, he was interested general surgery. However, fate placed him under the wing of Professor Andrzej Radek in a clinic in Łódź. From 1979 to 1985, he studied at the Medical Academy in Łódź, earning the title of Doctor of Medicine. He began working at the Department of Neurosurgery at the Military Medical Academy in Łódź, where he remained for 17 years—essentially until the institution ceased to exist. During that time, the academy's commandants-rectors were Brigadier General Prof. Władysław Tkaczewski, PhD (1981–1991), Brigadier General Prof. Henryk Chmielewski, PhD (1991–1998), and Colonel Prof. Jan Chojnacki, PhD (1998–2002). It was at this academy that Andrzej Maciejczak began to develop his expertise in his greatest passion—neurosurgery—continuously advancing his professional qualifications and successively holding the positions of assistant (1985–1988), senior

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assistant (1989–1993), adjunct (1994–2001), and professor at the MMA (2001–2002). In 1991, he defended his doctoral dissertation, titled *Wyniki kompleksowego leczenia zewnątrzkręgosłupowych nowotworów kręgosłupa w materiale Kliniki Neurochirurgii WAM w Łodzi* [Results of Comprehensive Treatment of Extradural Spinal Tumors Based on Material from the Department of Neurosurgery at the Military Medical Academy in Łódź], which already indicated a highly specialized focus of his interests. Taking advantage of new educational opportunities (as Western European countries became more accessible to Polish doctors), A. Maciejczak went to Glasgow, where from 1996 to 1997 he worked as a neurosurgeon at the Department of Neurosurgery at the Institute of Neurological Sciences and at the Department of Neurosurgery at the Southern General Hospital in Scotland's largest city. Upon returning to Poland, he continued his academic development and, in 2001, completed his postdoctoral habilitation. He was awarded the degree of Doctor habilitatus based on his thesis *Badania biomechaniczne in vitro stabilności kręgosłupa szyjnego po dyscektomii sposobem Clowarda* [In Vitro Biomechanical Studies on the Stability of the Cervical Spine After Cloward's Method of Discectomy]. Both his doctoral and habilitation theses received special recognition, earning him the Rector's Award from the Military Medical Academy for Best Doctoral Dissertation (1992) and Best Habilitation Thesis (2001).

Soon, the Military Medical Academy in Łódź was closed—its structures were incorporated into the Medical University of Łódź—and a new chapter began in Dr. Andrzej Maciejczak's life. He was faced with the decision of continuing his career outside of Łódź. His options were Zielona Góra, located west of his hometown, or Rzeszów, to the southeast. At the same time, he was approached by Anna Czech, director of St. Luke's Voivodeship Hospital in Tarnów, who initiated talks about employing him there. Ultimately, he chose to pursue academic work in Rzeszów and medical practice in Tarnów, settling in the area nearby. At first, he lived there alone, but his family joined him shortly thereafter.

He took the position of Head of the Neurosurgery Laboratory at the College of Medicine of the University of Rzeszów, later becoming Head of the Department of Neurology and Neurosurgery at the University's Faculty of Medicine, and eventually a full professor. In 2015, the President of the Republic of Poland, Andrzej Duda, awarded Andrzej Maciejczak the title of Professor of Medical Sciences in the field of neurosurgery. He was also involved in teaching at the Tarnów Academy as a lecturer in the Department of Physiotherapy and

became a cornerstone of the academic staff for the newly established medical program launched in 2024.

He continuously refined his skills by participating in numerous internships and training programs, among which the following are particularly noteworthy: EANS (European Association of Neurosurgical Societies) courses from 1991 to 1995 (Zaragoza, Jerusalem, Izmir, Bruges, Klagenfurt); Bochum (1992)—spinal stabilization; Berlin (1994)—minimally invasive spinal surgery; Prague (2000 and 2004)—spinal surgery; Liberec (2005)—artificial discs; Bonn (2008)—endoscopic disc surgery; Heidelberg (2008)—endoscopic and minimally invasive spinal surgery; and Manchester (2008)—endoscopic disc surgery.

He was actively involved in international education as a lecturer and trainer. Starting in 2000, he taught spinal surgery at training courses organized by the European Association of Neurosurgical Societies (EANS) for young neurosurgeons from the European Union, in cities including: Nice (2000, France); Rome (2002, Italy); Budapest (2004, Hungary); Luxembourg (2006); Trondheim (2008, Norway); and Padua (2010, Italy). From 2006 onward, he frequently lectured for the AO Spine International Association, conducting spinal surgery training for neurosurgeons and orthopedic surgeons in: Kraków (2006 and 2010), Bratislava (2007), Budapest (2008), Warsaw (2011), and Prague (2011).

He was also actively involved in postgraduate education and training in Poland, sharing his expertise—since 2000—with neurosurgeons, orthopedic surgeons, neurologists, internists, and general practitioners as a lecturer on spinal surgery for the Polish School of Neurosurgery within the Polish Society of Neurosurgeons (PTNCh). In recognition of his professional achievements, he was invited by international scientific societies as a special guest and honorary lecturer at numerous conferences, symposia, and congresses held around the world.

Professor Maciejczak was also a dedicated promoter of medical knowledge, participating in programs for lifelong learning students at universities of the third age and appearing in numerous radio and television programs. Shortly before his death, he was a guest at a Tarnów Champions League event held in the reading room of the Municipal Public Library, where he spoke about his early days in Tarnów, his work, challenges, and personal interests.

He published an original textbook titled *Chirurgia kręgosłupa szyjnego dla lekarzy* [Cervical Spine Surgery for Physicians]. He authored chapters on spinal diseases in Polish-language books published in Poland, including the chapter *Zespoły bólowe kręgosłupa* [Spinal Pain Syndromes] in the iconic *Interna Szczeklika* [Szczeklika's Internal

*Medicine*] textbook for internists and primary care doctors, as well as chapters in English-language books published abroad, such as *Cervical Kyphosis & Scoliosis* in the international textbook *Cervical Myelopathy*. He published 90 articles in reputable scientific English-language journals (including *Neurosurgery*, *Injury*, *European Spine Journal*) and delivered around 250 presentations at congresses and training events in Poland and abroad.

As an active physician, he took on the leadership of the Neurosurgery Department at St. Luke's Voivodeship Hospital, which over time he transformed into a Neurosurgery Clinic. He created one of the most highly regarded neurosurgical departments in Europe, equipped with the most advanced medical technology. His pioneering approach to treating nervous system disorders, the introduction of innovative surgical techniques, and tireless dedication to the department's development saved the lives and health of thousands of patients. He was the author of breakthrough procedures in brain and spinal cord surgery. His contributions to the development and implementation of minimally invasive surgical methods for spine treatment in clinical practice were also widely recognized.

From 2001 to 2005, he served as secretary, and from 2009 onward as a member of the Main Board of the Polish Society of Neurosurgeons, the Polish Society of Spine Surgery, Spine Society for Europe (Eurospine), the Congress of American Neurological Surgeons, the European Association of Neurosurgical Societies, and the Spine International Association—where he was Chairman of Neuro-Education (2007–2010) and Chairman of the Polish Council (from 2010). He was Vice President of the nationwide Association for the Study and Treatment of the Spine (2005–2010), an organization focused on developing new spinal surgical technologies and scientific research on the spine.

He was active as a reviewer for the English-language scientific journal *Acta Neurochirurgica* (Springer; 2002–2005) and chaired the Organizing Committee of the European Spine Society Congress (*Eurospine 2009*) held in Warsaw.

For his achievements, he was awarded honorary doctorates (doctorates honoris causa) from prestigious universities in Europe and the USA, as well as the title of Honorary Member of the European Neurosurgical

Society. In Poland, he was decorated with the Commander's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta, the Gold Cross of Merit, and the Medal of the National Education Commission for outstanding contributions to education and upbringing. He was honored with the Gloria Medicinae medal, the highest distinction of the Polish Medical Society awarded to outstanding physicians. He received the title of Person of the Year 2004 in a readers' poll by *Gazeta Krakowska* (in recognition of his contributions to the development and clinical implementation of minimally invasive spinal surgical methods) and was named Tarnów Citizen of the Year (2023). In June 2003, he was nominated for the Economic Award of the President of the Republic of Poland in the category of invention in the field of product or technology as a member of the scientific team and co-creator of a multifunctional system for treating surgical spinal dysfunctions. Posthumously, he was awarded a medal for merits to national defense by the Minister of National Defense.

In his private life, he was a warm, active, and open person. A passionate swimmer—he considered the dolphin stroke the most perfect style—and a participant and medalist in multiple editions of the Polish Masters Championships. A runner. A dancer fascinated by salsa. A music lover and jazz connoisseur, he also avidly listened to Prince and Metallica. He collected a unique assortment of musical instruments from around the world. A connoisseur of painting, he appreciated expressionists and impressionists. He still found time to read, counting cosmologist and priest Professor Michał Heller among the most outstanding authors he admired.

Professor Andrzej Maciejczak was a person sensitive to the needs of others. For many years, he supported the idea of building the first inpatient hospice in Tarnów, and during concerts dedicated to this initiative, he successfully took on the role of master of ceremonies.

For many years, Professor Maciejczak battled cancer. He passed away in Tarnów during the night of March 14 to 15, at the age of 64. The funeral ceremonies took place on Thursday, March 20, at the Church of St. Martin the Bishop in Zawada. A funeral mass was held there for the repose of his soul, and after the service, the Professor's ashes were laid to rest at the parish cemetery in Zawada (Poland).