

NON OMNIS MORIAR

IN MEMORIAM DANUTA SKOMRA, PhD, MD
(07.09.1956 – 10.03.2011)

Danuta Skomra, PhD, MD, a wonderful person and an outstanding pathomorphologist, passed away on 10 March 2011. Danusia's entire professional career was spent at the Chair and Department of Clinical Pathomorphology of the Medical University of Lublin. In 1981, she took up the post of Assistant and in 1996 she was promoted to Assistant Professor. In 1992, after submitting a doctoral thesis on "Evaluation of daunorubicin toxicity and effects of tocopherol and ascorbic acid on lesions identified in rat kidneys" prepared under the supervision of Prof.



Daniel Chibowski, PhD, MD, she was awarded the academic degree of Doctor of Medical Sciences. Danusia was very active in the research field, as evidenced by the publication of a total of 92 original works with a total impact factor (IF) of 91.743, and a number of distinctions and awards, including many from the Rector of the Medical University and from Poland's Minister of Health. Despite that, Danusia was first and foremost a pathomorphologist.

As she repeatedly stressed, she passed her examination for 2nd degree specialization even before the successful defence of her doctoral thesis (in 1990), which is a remarkable achievement among our Chair's research and teaching staff. From that time she had her sights firmly set on developing her professional skills. She took part in many courses and training sessions. She also completed an academic internship at Zentrum Pathologie und Rechtsmedizin, Medizinische Hochschule in Hannover, Germany. Her hard work, in combination with natural ability, allowed her to accumulate a vast knowledge and remarkable professional skills. Danusia showed expertise in practically every area of pathomorphology. In the medical community she came to be respected as an invaluable expert, particularly on hematopathology. Her achievements were noticed in the Polish scientific community. She was a member of many organizations, including the Polish Lymphoma Research Group, Polish Hematopathologists' Group and the Working Group for Hematopathology of the Polish Society of Pathologists. Danusia's enormous practical and theoretical knowledge was appreciated especially by her closest associates. We could always, as long as Danusia lived, count on her invaluable help in resolving the most diagnostically challenging cases.

She never let clinicians down, either. A typical scene that we could see almost on a daily basis was Danusia sitting at her microscope and holding a telephone receiver, talking to – judging by snippets of the conversation – a crowd of medical practitioners at the other end of the line, helping them clarify the doubts they had about their patients. She offered her advice with an almost saintly patience and outstanding composure, without any unnecessary comments. She always knew that every phone call and every analysed microscope slide could be linked to a dramatic situa-

tion or uncertainty experienced by another person and that person's nearest and dearest. As a result, she always tried to find time for face-to-face meetings with patients or their families.

Danuta Skomra was also a truly exceptional teacher, as confirmed e.g. by internal medicine and dermatology specialists participating in post-graduate courses in histopathological diagnostics of lymphomas and skin diseases, where she taught. The courses were highly appreciated by their participants, and rightly so, because Danuta was always superbly prepared and, at the same time, extremely committed to the task. As an academic teacher she was also very popular and liked by everyone. She trained a huge number of medical professionals, some of whom followed in her footsteps.

In addition to her career work, Danusia pursued fascinating activities with her beloved husband Staś – in their own "place under the sun", a small village in the vicinity of Lublin. In recent years they took an interest in photographing insects, in which they excelled. They also possessed a thorough, truly professional knowledge of nomenclature, taxonomy and habits of arthropods. The fruit of their passion is an extraordinary collection of photographs which could be the envy of many entomologists.

Despite her outstanding skills, however, Danusia remained an incredibly modest person. She always shied away from recognition and praise. The utmost priority in her professional career was always the patients, to whom she devoted almost her entire time and abilities. Therefore, it will forever remain a mystery how she could reconcile her medical career with the roles of wife, mother and – recently – loving grandmother of little Kubuś. Paradoxically, her seri-



ous disease gave Danusia more time for her family and friends. Even though she suffered a lot, she remained herself: a warm, caring and cheerful indi-

vidual who always trusted in God's providence. She was a rock to her family even through the hardest of times. She was also a pathologist until the last days of her life, treating her profession not only as a job that had to be done properly, but as a special mission. One of the most poignant proofs of her dedication was one of her last wishes – to put a microscope lens into her coffin after her death. She was buried with the lens, a rosary and an image of the Mother of God – a pathomorphologist devoted to God and to the people.

Danusia's death was a great loss not only to her Chair, but also to her many friends and colleagues. She will always live on in our memory as a very special person.

Justyna Szumilo and fellow associates from the Chair and Department of Clinical Pathomorphology of the Medical University of Lublin