

THE HISTORY OF POLISH PHARMACY MUSEUMS IN THE CONTEXT OF EUROPEAN MUSEOLOGY

POVIJEST MUZEJA FARMACIJE U POLJSKOJ U KONTEKSTU EUROPSKE MUZEOLOGIJE

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SUMMARY

The article outlines the history of Polish pharmacy museums in the broader European context. The first efforts to establish such an institution date back to the second half of the 19th century, when, despite the lack of a Polish sovereign state, Polish pharmacists, passionate about their trade, called for the creation of a pharmacy museum. Their continued efforts faced multiple obstacles, with the two World Wars being the worst of them. During the inter-war period, multiple collections were assembled, but the first Polish museum of pharmacy was established only after the Second World War, in 1946, in Kraków, thanks to Dr Stanisław Proń. In the 1970s, a number of smaller museums were established in other Polish cities, including Lublin, Warsaw, Poznań, Bydgoszcz, and Gdańsk. The transformation following the collapse of the Iron Curtain caused a temporary crisis for pharmacy museums in Poland, with some establishments being liquidated due to the withdrawal of funding. However, soon after Polish society became accustomed to the new realities, a number of museums were restored, and even new ones were established, some as part of municipal museums (Warszawa, Bydgoszcz), some within universities, and some even funded by private companies (Lublin, Łódź). The article illustrates the richness and distinctiveness of the field of Polish pharmaceutical museology, while also observing its connection to wider European realities.

Keywords: pharmacy museums, Poland, museology, history of pharmacy

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INTRODUCTION

The objective of the present article is to outline the history of Polish museums of pharmacy from the end of the 19th century to the third decade of the 21st century. This study is based on an extensive analysis of published literature, museum documentation, and historical reports. The authors adopt a comparative and descriptive historical approach, focusing on Polish institutions within the broader context of European pharmaceutical museology. It will be an opportunity to show the genesis of Polish museums of pharmacy and to determine to what extent their establishment and development was linked to the contemporary political and economic situation of the country. It will also be important from a scholarly point of view to determine whether the establishment of Polish museums of pharmacy differed from similar processes taking place in other European countries. To begin with, it should be acknowledged that, regardless of the local factors, Polish museums of pharmacy are part of a general, broader European cultural phenomenon of creating museums focused on the history of pharmacy. Due to the complexity of the above-mentioned issue, the present study will exclude permanent and temporary exhibitions devoted to the subject of pharmacy, carried out by national and local museums, as well as the historical (or historicising) interior decoration of dispensary rooms in pharmacies. These issues warrant their own separate study. The authors would also like to note that, although they have endeavoured to exhaust the subject in the case of Poland, they do not claim to do so in relation to the whole of Europe. The history of European pharmacy museums has been used here solely as a background for the museum-building processes taking place in Poland, to provide illustrative examples that indicate certain broader trends and phenomena. For that reason, the authors recognise that every single one of the European countries deserves a separate treatment due to the complexity and scope of the topic – suffice to say that, for example, in Germany alone, there are currently 22 museums of pharmacy (Huwert, n/a, p. 59).

THE PHARMACY MUSEUM – THE DEFINITION IN THE POLISH CONTEXT

It is not an easy task to define what exactly a pharmacy museum is. An institution that can be defined by this term tends to be concerned with issues relating to the past of medicine and medicinal raw materials, treated in the context of academic science and ethnology, as well as testimonies concerning the activities of pharmacies and pharmacists, the pharmaceutical industry, and therefore professional and scientific organisations and institutions. It should be added that, in the

light of today's definition of a museum, these testimonies can be both material and intangible in nature (International Council of Museums, 2025; *Ustawa o muzeach*, 1997). The collections of a pharmacy museum may therefore consist of: an old pharmacy, a pharmacognostic collection, factory equipment, a collection of archival documents, etc. The above observation indicates that pharmacy museums, by their very nature, form a substantively heterogeneous collection (Ślusarczyk, 2023, p. 104). They can be housed in purpose-built museum spaces, however, oftentimes the premises are themselves a place of pharmaceutical heritage. When the collection is housed in a repurposed historical pharmacy, it is often referred to by its slightly different name – pharmacy-museum (Muzeum-Apteka). On top of that, due to the similarities and links between the professions of a doctor and a pharmacist, there are also museums of medicine and pharmacy. Finally, as the example of the pharmacy 'Under the Eagle' (Apteka pod Orłem) in Kraków shows, pharmacies can be connected to other aspects of heritage, since this pharmacy was run in the Kraków Ghetto in 1941–1943 by Tadeusz Pankiewicz, recognised as 'The Righteous Among the Nations' for his involvement in rescuing Jews from the Holocaust (Pankiewicz, 2007; Pióro, 2013, pp. 187–226). Thus, in spite of its name, the exhibition held there is not focused on the topic of the history of pharmacy. The above thematic and nomenclatural variety is followed by formal and organisational diversity. As of today, such establishments are mainly organised by universities, local authorities, and private individuals or companies. This means that pharmacy museums are often part of larger entities, although there are also some that can be described as independent institutions (Ślusarczyk, 2023, p. 104). This organisational heterogeneity of Polish museums was just as evident in the past.

THE FIRST INITIATIVES TO ESTABLISH A PHARMACY MUSEUM IN POLAND (1881–1914)

The origins of Polish museums date back to the 19th century, a time when there was no sovereign Polish state. Poland was divided into three partitions, occupied and ruled by foreign powers: the Russian Empire, the Kingdom of Prussia, the German Empire, and the Austrian Empire, later known as the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Dreścik, 2005, pp. 209–218). This unique situation meant that there was no state support for cultural enterprises, and in many cases, the partitioning powers suppressed such efforts. The first attempts to establish a pharmacy museum were grassroots initiatives that can be traced to the latter parts of the 19th century. In 1881, on the pages of *Pharmaceutical News* (Wiadomości Farmaceutyczne), historian Ernest Świeżawski-Sulimczyk and pharmacist and historian of pharmacy, Kazimierz Wenda called on the members of the Pharmaceutical Socie-

ty of Warszawa to start collecting memorabilia associated with the pharmaceutical profession, appealing to the recipients' sense of professional prestige. The aim of the campaign was to create the foundation of a 'future museum of pharmacy artefacts' (Proń, 1967, p. 20). The society declared its willingness to organise it, and the collection was to be acquired through donations, mainly from pharmacy owners. However, it seems that the initial enthusiasm did not translate into anything tangible, as the first donations would not arrive until 1888. In 1891, a new proposal was put forward in the pages of 'Pharmaceutical News' to create an exhibition of pharmacy and chemistry-related artefacts, which would be displayed in the Museum of Industry and Agriculture in Warsaw. However, despite the passage of years, it was not possible to realise the above idea, as the number of donated relics was still insufficient. Despite all this, the activists did not give up. When the First Congress of Pharmacists of the Kingdom of Poland was held in Łódź in May 1912, Teofil Tugenholt reiterated his earlier appeal, asking attendees to send all pharmacy-related memorabilia to the pharmaceutical societies. These were intended to be used in creating a single museum in the future. The efforts of the Pharmaceutical Society of Warszawa did not cease either, as it issued another appeal urging the professional community to donate pharmacy-related memorabilia to its headquarters on the pages of the 'Pharmaceutical News' again in 1913. Pharmacists from the Austrian partition also showed commitment towards the establishment of the museum. In 1900, the Galician Pharmacy Society in Lwów (Lviv) and the Society of Provincial Pharmacists in Galicia exhibited their modest collections (Ślusarczyk, 2010, p. 135). The lack of similar efforts in the third, German partition can be explained by the fact that the overwhelming majority of pharmacies there were owned by pharmacists of German nationality, which was a result of the Germanisation policy (Ślusarczyk & Wilczyńska, 2021, pp. 278–280). While the situation of Polish people under Russian and Austrian rule was far from ideal, Poles still accounted for the majority of pharmacy owners (Ślusarczyk, 2020, pp. 68, 90). The above illustrates how instrumental was the professional pharmaceutical community to museum-forming processes during that time period. These efforts can be defined as grassroots initiatives of passionate pharmacists who donate interesting objects from their own pharmacies and try to convince their colleagues to do the same. These initiatives would most likely have resulted in the establishment of museums, were it not for the outbreak of the First World War in 1914.

RENEWED EFFORTS DURING THE INTERWAR PERIOD (1918–1939)

The aspirations, suspended during the war, were revived in 1918 in a completely new reality, as the Polish state, after 123 years, reappeared on the map as

an independent entity. Two years later, K. Wenda would again write in 'Pharmaceutical News' to remind the public of the need to establish a pharmacy museum. Due to repeated appeals, a nucleus of such an institution was finally established in the 1930s, when the collected artefacts were housed in the headquarters of the Polish General Pharmaceutical Society (Polskie Powszechne Towarzystwo Farmaceutyczne, hereinafter: PPTF) in Warszawa at 16 Długa St, and a separate room with a permanent exhibition was set up there (Majewski, 2016, p. 17). Earlier, in 1922, during the General Assembly of the Pharmacy Society in Lwów, an exhibition was presented that featured a pharmacognostic and chemical collection, as well as pharmacy utensils. The Association of Pharmacy Owners of the Dąbrowa Basin in Częstochowa also gathered a considerable collection. Within its premises, a room was designated for a library and antiquities. Professor Jan Muszyński from the Pharmacognosy Department of the Pharmaceutical Faculty of Stefan Batory University in Wilno (Vilnius) also assembled a sizeable collection, consisting of pharmaceutical vessels and instruments, old prints, rare exotic raw materials, and Lithuanian folk medicines, which, interestingly, has survived to this day and is presently kept in Kaunas (Šimaitienė, 2010, p. 31). Pharmacists from the area of the former Prussian partition and Upper Silesia were slightly behind, due to a lack of previous traditions; nevertheless, in 1931, on the initiative of Professor Konstanty Hrynakowski, the Museum of National Pharmaceutical Industry was established at the Pharmaceutical Department of the University of Poznań (Piechocki & Piechocka, 2024, p. 221). Its establishment and activities were made possible by the financial support of the growing domestic industry. Consequently, its collection had a contemporary and propagandistic character, primarily because it consisted mainly of medicines produced by Polish pharmaceutical companies. They were placed in display cabinets standing in the corridor of the Pharmaceutical Department (Majewski, 2005, p. 39). All of the above developments led at best to the creation of museum surrogates. Artefacts of material culture, medicines, and pharmacognostic preparations were usually displayed in one room together with books, thus forming hybrid library-museum spaces. Nothing is known about the possible cataloguing of the collections created, with the only known exception being the museum in Poznań (Ajdukiewicz-Tarkowska, 2013, p. 426).

The above situation can be largely explained by the fact that, firstly, the pharmacists were not museologists. Their involvement in creating and displaying collections was undoubtedly driven by passion, but it was a side occupation, and thus, they could not dedicate their undivided attention to such goal. Secondly, the pharmaceutical community at the time was divided into two camps - employers and employees, operating in separate professional organisations. Although the

two camps were in agreement on many issues: concern for the prestige of pharmacy, the reform of the pharmacists' training system, the unification of post-partition legislation relating to the profession and the idea of setting up a self-governing body in the form of chambers of pharmacists, the main obstacle remained conflicting economic interests, which made cooperation difficult. The rift even intensified during a period of hyperinflation and the Great Economic Crisis (Ślusarczyk, 2020). What this meant was that there were more pressing matters the pharmacists were concerned with, and the establishment of museums, which was ultimately a side activity, was pushed down the list of priorities. Nevertheless, one can observe that despite all these obstacles, efforts to establish pharmacy museums in the interwar period continued to develop, and it can be assumed that the pharmaceutical community was not far from finally creating a fully-fledged, professional institution. There were even some initiatives to establish a nationwide pharmacy museum, associated mainly with Dr Robert Rembieliński, who in 1936 called for this at the PPTF congress. Sadly, the outbreak of the Second World War, just three years later, interrupted all museological efforts (Ajdukiewicz-Tarkowska, 2013, p. 426; Ślusarczyk, 2023, p. 111).

Many collections of future pharmacy museums in other European countries were also created as a result of the passion and determination of individuals, often retired pharmacists (Jarosz, 2020, p. 137). The beginnings of targeted pharmaceutical collecting date back to the second half of the 19th century and are associated with the activities of the Swiss pharmacists Burchard Reber and Theodor Engelman (Proń, 1967, p. 9). It was part of the wider, contemporary phenomenon of the creation of technical, scientific, and economic museums (Pomian, 2023, pp. 404–408; Żygulski Jr., 1982, pp. 25–35, 68–71). It was probably due to the niche nature of pharmacy, however, that the first museum dedicated to it in Europe was not established until 1924, when the Pharmaziemuseum der Universität Basel was founded in Switzerland (Pharmaziemuseum Universität Basel, 2023; Proń, 1967, p. 9). By the end of the interwar period, three more museums had been established. In 1936, the Society of Lithuanian Pharmacists and the Union of Lithuanian Pharmacists established the Museum of Ancient Lithuanian Pharmacy (Lithuanian: Senovės Lietuvos Vaistinės Muziejų) in Kaunas (Jarosz, 2020, p. 139; Mekas, 2017, p. 5). In 1937, the present-day German Pharmacy Museum (German: Deutsche Apotheken-Museum) (Huwer, 2006, pp. 8–11) was established in Munich on a similar basis, and a year later, the Pharmacy Museum (Latvian: Farmācijas muzejs) was founded in Riga (Jarosz, 2020, p. 139). World War II, however, was a disastrous period for European museology (Żygulski Jr., 1982, p. 76). This also applied to most pharmacy museums, whose activities were halted and whose collections

were often dispersed or destroyed. In 1940, the museum in Munich was closed due to the threat of Allied air raids (Huwer, 2006, pp. 8–11). At the same time, the Soviet authorities closed down the Kaunas museum (Mekas, 2007, p. 5). The Polish lands, being the battlegrounds of two totalitarian regimes, were among the worst-affected places and had most of their collections looted or destroyed (Arabas, 2017, p. 42).

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FIRST POLISH PHARMACY MUSEUMS DURING THE TIME OF THE POLISH PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC (1945–1989)

The establishment of the first genuine Polish pharmacy museum was only possible after the end of the Second World War, since, interestingly, the complicated post-war realities resulted in a situation that was conducive to its creation. At that time, the national pharmaceutical environment was unified; initially, it was voluntary within the structures of the then-organised pharmaceutical chambers, and shortly thereafter, it became compulsory as a result of the nationalisation of pharmacies (Ślusarczyk, 2016, pp. 51–53, 147). In that environment, the crucial role was played by Dr Stanisław Proń, who worked as director of the office and legal advisor to the Regional Pharmaceutical Chamber in Kraków from 1945 to 1950. It was on his initiative that on 16 November 1946, the Chamber passed a resolution to establish the Pharmacy Museum of the Kraków Region. It was assumed that the collection would consist of donations or deposits from private individuals, public and private pharmacies, and other institutions (Stabrawa, 2007, p. 13). Dr Proń became its first director. When, in 1951, the communist authorities dismantled the pharmaceutical self-governments, the continued existence of the Museum was called into question again; however, Dr Proń, as both a lawyer and pharmacist, turned out to be well-prepared to navigate the uneasy political environment of the period. He managed to convince the Ministry of Health to support his vision (Proń, 2016, p. 130), which led to the institution in Kraków being taken over, renaming it the Historical Museum of Polish Pharmacy, and subsequently serving as the national centre for pharmaceutical heritage in Poland. Paradoxically, therefore, the abolition of the pharmaceutical professional self-government and the nationalisation of pharmacies, which was a blow to the Polish pharmaceutical community, led to the extension of interests of the Kraków museum beyond the region of Lesser Poland, and its functioning under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Health ensured the museum's nationwide status (Proń, 1948, p. 458). Organisationally, however, the Museum underwent many transformations. In 1952, the Minister of Health decided that it should be part of the Central Medical Library (Główna Biblioteka Lekarska, hereinafter: GBL) in Warsaw. Consequently, the

museum nominally became the GBL Pharmaceutical Documentation Centre of the Central Medical Library with its headquarters in Kraków (Bela, 2013a, pp. 302–306). In 1961, it became the property of the Faculty of Pharmacy at the Medical Academy in Kraków, once again earning the well-deserved title of the Museum of Pharmacy. Finally, in 1993, when the Medical Academy merged with the Jagiellonian University, it became known as the Museum of Pharmacy of the Collegium Medicum of the Jagiellonian University and under this name it functions to this day (Ekiert & Stabrawa, 1996, p. 6; Rzepiela, 2024, p. 181).

The specificity of post-war Poland and the tightening grip of the communist regime paradoxically had a positive impact on assembling the Museum collection. The nationalisation of the pharmaceutical sector meant that from then on, the equipment of all pharmacies, which often included historical objects, became property of the state. Dr Proń travelled all over the country, armed with a gag order issued by the Minister of Health, allowing him to enter nationalised pharmacies and acquire interesting objects for the museum (Stabrawa, 2007, p. 17). While it may appear that the historic fabric of Polish pharmacies was being pillaged, in fact, this activity was instrumental in preserving the pharmaceutical heritage. In the 1960s, as part of the restructuring of the pharmaceutical sector, pharmacies were often liquidated or thoroughly modernised. Their original furnishings, often the fruit and testimony of the work of generations of pharmacists, were then usually irretrievably destroyed and replaced with furniture and equipment that met socialist requirements. The Kraków museum, therefore, rescued the most interesting relics from such a fate. The museum opened its first permanent exhibition in 1956 in a building at 3 Basztowa Street. However, due to continuous efforts to procure new artefacts, the premises soon proved too small. Eventually, in 1978, the museum relocated to its present, larger premises at 25 Floriańska Street (Brzezińska, 1972, pp. 821–822; Bela, 2013a, pp. 305–309). However, the new exhibition did not open until 1991 (Ślusarczyk, 2014, pp. 122–124; Zduńska, 1991, p. 427).

When one examines the story of the museum's establishment, it is impossible to overlook the crucial role Dr Stanisław Proń played. Being of dual background, both in pharmacy and law, he was well qualified to tackle the difficult task of organising and then transforming the museum (Bela, 2013b, p. 298, Bilek, 2011, p. 67; Proń, 2016, p. 112). As a pharmacist, he understood the importance of pharmaceutical traditions and memorabilia, and as a jurist, he was able to handle tasks of a legal and administrative nature. He sought to create an institution that, in addition to its collective and exhibition activities, would also have scientific and didactic functions (Proń, 1950, p. 383). His concept represented a pre-war concern for the humanist and ethical aspects of the pharmacist's profession, while also

aligning with the pro-social rhetoric of post-war state authorities (Proń, 2016, p. 130; Szpak, 2012, p. 237). While the realities of post-war Poland made some aspects of organising a museum easier, especially in terms of assembling the collection, one cannot forget that it was also the time of Stalinist terror and crackdown on many grassroots initiatives. For Dr Proń to succeed in realising his ambition was a considerable achievement.

In other European countries, too, the resumption of museum-making processes in the pharmaceutical field took place in the 1950s. The post-war period was marked by the proliferation of museums. It is noteworthy that they were created regardless of the political and economic situation at the time, regardless of which side of the Iron Curtain they were on. In each of the countries mentioned, museums were usually established at the initiative of the local pharmaceutical community, often in cooperation with local universities or municipal authorities. In 1950, the German museum was reopened and moved to Bamberg. Its funding was handled by a foundation set up by the Workers' Community of the Professional Representation of German Pharmacists. Seven years later, due to the expansion of the collection, the museum was again moved to its present location in the castle ruins in Heidelberg (Huwer, 2006, pp. 8–11). In 1957, Professor Alfonsas Kairakis of Kaunas University of Medical Sciences, drawing on pre-war traditions, began collecting pharmaceutical artefacts. In 1973, his collection became the basis for a museum collection restored by the local Faculty of Pharmacy and Dentistry (Jarosz, 2020, p. 139). In 1957, the Riga museum was merged with the Pauls Stradiņš Museum of the History of Medicine (Latvian: Pauls Stradiņa Medicīnas Vēstures Muzejs). In 1986, a branch dedicated to pharmacy was separated within it (*Farmācijas muzejs*, 2025). New facilities were also established in other countries. Between 1947 and 1954, the Museum of Pharmacy (Czech: Lékárnické Muzeum) was established at the Department of Pharmacognosy and Pharmacology of Charles University in Prague, thanks to the efforts of Prof. Jaroslav Hladik. In 1957, its collections were transferred to the Institute of the History of Pharmacy of the Faculty of Pharmacy of Masaryk University in Brno, where they were to form the foundation of the future museum. Three years later, following the liquidation of the Faculty, the collection was divided between the University in Bratislava and the Dittrich Pharmacy (Czech: Dittrichova lékárna) in Prague, where the museum was established in 1959 (Bartunek, 2018, pp. 237–240; Svatoš, 2025). However, it ceased operations at the end of the 1960s, due to the reconstruction of the pharmacy. In 1972, the collection, with the aim of establishing a new museum, was handed over to the Faculty of Pharmacy at Prague University, located in Hradec Králové, which subsequently placed it in the hospital in Kuks (Svatoš, 2025). In

1948, the pharmacy-museum 'Under the Golden Eagle' (Hungarian 'Arany Sas' Patikamúzeum) in Budapest was opened to the public (Thuras, 2025). In 1952, thanks to private donations from pharmacists, above all from M.Sc. Pharm. Andrija Mirković, the Museum of the History of Pharmacy (Serbian: Музеј за Историју Фармације) was established at the Faculty of Pharmacy of the University of Belgrade (Krajnović & Kerničan, 2009, p. 179). In the same year, the Museum of Pharmacy – Pharmacy 'at the Red Crayfish' (Slovakian: Múzeum Farmácie - Lekáreň 'U červeného raka') was established in Bratislava as a branch of the City Museum (Hernando, 2019, pp. 57–58; Lichocka & Arabas, 1993, pp. 158–159; Molenda, 1966, p. 148). In the following years, museum-making activity was also undertaken in Soviet Ukraine. In 1966, the Lviv Pharmacy-Museum 'Under the Black Eagle' was opened to the public, and 12 years later, it gained the status of a national museum. It should be noted that the Lviv institution was established in a pharmacy that had been in operation since 1735, which continues to carry out its main activities (Jarosz, 2020, pp. 137–138; Tereszczuk et al., 1993, p. 55). In 1986, the Kyiv Pharmacy-Museum of Podolia (Ukrainian: Аптека - Музей на Подолі) was opened in Kyiv (Jarosz, 2020, p. 138). In 1972, the Romanian Museum of the History of Pharmacy (Romanian: Muzeul de Istoria a Farmaciei), a branch of the National Brukenthal Museum (Romanian: Muzeul Național Brukenthal) in Sibiu, started its activities (Muzeul National Brukenthal, 2025). In 1989, in eastern Germany, the Lower Lausatian Pharmacy Museum (German: Niederlausitzer Apothekenmuseum) was established in Chociebusz, which later became the Brandenburg Pharmacy Museum (German: Brandenburgisches Apothekenmuseum) in 2002 (Brandenburgisches Apothekenmuseum in Cottbus, 2025).

In Poland, until the mid-1970s, the only museum of pharmacy was located in Kraków; however, the voices calling for the creation of similar institutions in other cities had already appeared in the pages of the journal 'Polish Pharmacy' (Farmacja Polska) a decade earlier

(Majewski, 2006, p. 37; Najder, 1961, p. 151), which could be linked to the end of the Stalinist terror and the partial liberalisation of social life (Eisler, 2006, pp. 11–23). Eventually, in 1975, on the initiative of the Pharmaceutical Supply Company (Przedsiębiorstwo Zaopatrzenia Farmaceutycznego, hereinafter: PZF) 'Cefarm' Lublin, headed by pharmacists Eleonora Zipser, Alina Wawrzosek, and Leon Jamrozik, the Lublin Pharmacy History Room was established in the premises next to the pharmacy on Mieszka I Street. Thanks to cooperation with the Medical Academy in Lublin, it was relocated to Lublin Old Town in 1984 and transformed into a Pharmacy-Museum (Kisielewski, 2019, p. 64). In 1985, on the initiative of the Warszawa Branch of the Polish Pharmaceutical Society (Polsk-

ie Towarzystwo Farmaceutyczne, hereinafter: PTFarm), with the support of the Warszawa PZF 'Cefarm' which provided the premises, the Antonina Leśniewska Museum of Pharmacy was established in the Polish capital. It was named after the first Polish female pharmacist M.Sc., and its first curator became Dr Teodor Kikta (Arabas, 2017, p. 44). In 1989, thanks to the efforts of the Poznań PZF 'Cefarm' and the Pharmacy History Section of the Poznań Branch of the PTFarm under the leadership of Professor Witold Włodzimierz Głowacki, the Museum of Pharmacy in Poznań was established (Majewski, 1991, p. 117), and Dr Jan Majewski became its first curator (Majewski, 1989, pp. 8–13). Other places in Poland also witnessed attempts to establish pharmacy museums. The pharmacists from PTFarm in Włocławek sought to do so since as early as the 1950s (Gnatowska, 1992, pp. 410–414; Ślusarczyk, 2013, p. 205). Similar attempts were made in the 1960s by members of the PTFarm in Białystok, which were successfully concluded in 1986 when the collected artefacts were exhibited in a separate room of pharmacy number 05-004, named after a famous Polish pharmacist and researcher in the field of hygiene, Prof. Bronisław Koskowski (Majewski, 2006, pp. 63–65). In 1979, thanks to the efforts of Krzysztof Berenthal and the support of the local PZF 'Cefarm', a Pharmacy Memorial Chamber was established in the 'Ratuszowa' pharmacy in Gdańsk (Pisarska-Umańska, 2025). As one can observe, this period was characterised by close cooperation between the branches of PTFarm and PZF 'Cefarm'. The former brought in the involvement of pharmacists who were passionate about history, while the latter provided the locales for setting up museums, financed them, and allowed the acquisition of artefacts from subordinate pharmacies.

THE PHARMACY MUSEUMS IN POLAND AFTER THE TRANSFORMATION

The collapse of communism in Poland in 1989 and the associated significant transformation of economic life led to a temporary crisis in pharmaceutical museology. The privatisation of PZF 'Cefarm', which was instrumental in earlier efforts, resulted in its branches withdrawing their funding from museums. This was what interrupted the museum-making process in Włocławek - PZF 'Cefarm' Bydgoszcz retracted its backing. As a result, the entire collection – comprising 879 items – was handed over to the Museum of the Kujawy and Dobrzyń Land in Włocławek, where it was primarily included in the History Department (Gnatowska, 1992, p. 205). The collection in Białystok, where, in 1991, the local branch of PZF 'Cefarm' ceased funding a separate room to exhibit artefacts, was moved by the members of PTFarm to be deposited at the Medical Academy in Białystok (Majewski, 2006, pp. 63–65). The exhibits presented in the 'Ratuszowa' pharmacy in Gdańsk faced

a similar fate; in 1992, they were divided. One part was taken over by the Gdańsk Branch of PTFarm, which then displayed it at the Pharmaceutical Faculty of the Gdańsk Medical Academy, and the other remained in the privatised pharmacy until its liquidation in 2008 (Pisarska-Umańska, 2025). The Museum in Warszawa fared only slightly better, and in 2000, the local PZF 'Cefarm' also announced the end of its museum. Fortunately, thanks to the initiative of Professor Iwona Arabas, in 2002, it became a branch of the Historical Museum of the City of Warsaw (now the Warsaw Museum). In 2006, it was moved to new premises in a tenement house at 31/33 Piwna Street, in Warsaw's Old Town (Arabas, 2017, p. 44). In Poznań, the local museum was saved thanks to a grassroots initiative. When local PZF 'Cefarm' retracted its funding, the newly established Regional Pharmaceutical Chamber of the Greater Poland rose to the challenge and took over the museum in 1992 (Majewski, 2006, p. 44). One could say that history went full circle, as it was the first time since the establishment of the first pharmacy museum in Poland by the Pharmacy Chamber of Kraków that a professional self-government managed a pharmacy museum. Sadly, no similar initiative was undertaken, up until 2022, when the Silesian Medical Chamber in Katowice opened its own Museum of the History of Medicine and Pharmacy (Ślusarczyk, 2023, p. 121).

A unique situation in this respect occurred in the case of the Pharmacy-Museum in Lublin. It was maintained by a private company, the Polish Pharmaceutical Group (Polska Grupa Farmaceutyczna, hereafter: PGF), which evolved from PZF 'Cefarm' (Majewski, 2006, p. 37). The PGF is a good example of how a large corporation can be interested in funding a museum, despite it being an activity that, by definition, is not profit-oriented. In addition to the above-mentioned Pharmacy Museum in Lublin, in 2008, it established the Museum of Pharmacy in Łódź named after Prof. Jan Muszyński. Its first director was the historian of pharmacy, Dr Wojciech Giermaziak. The museum is housed in a tenement house at Liberty Square, sharing it with the first pharmacy in Łódź, which has been operating there uninterruptedly since 1840 (Hanisz & Ślusarczyk, 2011, p. 168). Both museums are open to the public and are still maintained by a private enterprise, no longer by PGF, but by a pharmaceutical retail company, DOZ. It is, however, a technicality, as both companies operate under the shared umbrella of Pelion S.A., the holding company. The above example shows how the initial difficulties of the transformation period eventually gave way to new opportunities. After the Polish society became accustomed to new socio-economic realities and the market had stabilised, a social climate favourable to museums emerged.

The re-privatisation of the pharmaceutical sector has also resulted in the establishment of museums within pharmacies. In 1991, the Little Museum of Phar-

macy, named after Mieczysław Giziński, M.Sc., was established in the 'Golden Dust' (Złoty Pył) pharmacy in Turek. Its organiser was Mgr. Janina Gizińska, a pharmacist and the daughter-in-law of the museum's patron, who collected pharmacy artefacts. The opening of the museum was the fulfilment of his last wish (Gizińska, 1999, pp. 24–26). In 1993, a Museum of Pharmacy was established in the basement of the 'Under the Eagle' (Pod Orłem) pharmacy in Wronki. It was a small institution created by Paweł Stryczyński, a pharmacist with a passion for the history of his profession (Majewski, 2006, p. 91). In 2003, the owner of the 'Under the Swan' (Pod Łabędziem) pharmacy in Bydgoszcz established the Pharmacy Museum of the 'Under the Swan' pharmacy in its spacious back room (Ślusarczyk, 2023, p. 122). However, an inherent vulnerability of establishments closely linked to private pharmacies that were not part of a larger franchise was their direct dependence on the economic condition of the pharmacies. The entry of foreign pharmacy chains into Poland led to a tightening of the competition, and many local pharmacies went out of business. In 2007, this was the fate of the pharmacy 'Golden Dust'. The exhibits on display had to be stored in wardrobes. Ten years later, the 'Under the Swan' pharmacy in Bydgoszcz did not survive the competition, and its liquidation put an end to the existence of the associated pharmacy museum. In its case, however, thanks to the understanding of the Bydgoszcz authorities, a solution already tested years ago in Warszawa was implemented. In 2017, the collection of the liquidated pharmacy museum was taken over by the Leon Wyczółkowski District Museum in Bydgoszcz, which, five years later, opened its new branch in the former 'Under the Swan' pharmacy (Ślusarczyk, 2023, pp. 25–26, 169, 180–181). The attitude of officials in Warszawa and Bydgoszcz, who allowed the takeover (and financing) of pharmacy museums threatened with liquidation by cultural institutions subordinate to them, testifies to a growing awareness of the importance of cultural heritage.

Following the example of other European countries, Polish universities also began to establish their own pharmacy museums. After World War II, efforts to establish a museum of pharmacy were resumed by Robert Rembieliński, who was then associated with the Department of Pharmacy Propedeutics and the Organisation of Health Care and Pharmaceutical Service at the Medical Academy in Łódź (in 1962, he became the first professor of the history of pharmacy in the country). Thanks to his efforts, a number of relics were collected. Initially, however, the museum could not be established due to the lack of suitable premises (Ajdukiewicz-Tarkowska, 2013, p. 426). It was then that the long-standing head of the Department of the History of Pharmacy, Prof. Henryk Pankiewicz, got involved in the establishment of the museum, and it was he who became its first

curator. In 1995, the museum was given a more spacious, separate room within the Faculty building (Majewski, 2006, p. 55). Currently, the facility functions as the Museum of Pharmacy and the Faculty of Pharmacy of the Medical University of Lodz (Hanisz, 2013, p. 339). A university museum of pharmacy and medicine was also established in 2011 at the Medical University of Białystok. Its genesis dates back to 1967, when members of the Białystok Branch of the PTFarm began collecting artefacts (Majewski, 2006, pp. 63-65). From 1995, they were presented in a room of the newly established Laboratory of the History of Medicine and Pharmacy, and since 2003, in one of the rooms of the Branicki Palace, owned by the Medical University of Białystok, the new incarnation of the former Medical Academy (Majewski, 2006, pp. 67-68). This was the basis of the Museum of the History of Medicine and Pharmacy at the Medical University of Białystok, which was formally established in 2011 (Uniwersytet Medyczny w Białymstoku, 2025). Another university museum was also established in the same year in Wrocław's Old Town. Its opening was the result of the efforts of Prof. Bożena Płonka-Syroka from the Department of Humanities at the Faculty of Pharmacy at Wrocław's Piastów Śląskich University and her husband, Andrzej Syroka. The funds needed to renovate the building, in which it is located came from the university's budget and the support of sponsors, including the Lower Silesian Regional Pharmaceutical Chamber, the Foundation for Polish-German Cooperation in Warszawa, as well as the European Union as part of the project entitled 'The Silesian Pharmacist's House'. A. Syroka became the first director of the museum (Uniwersytet Medyczny, 2025). The most recent addition to this group was established in 2018 in Sosnowiec, the Museum of Medicine and Pharmacy of the Silesian Medical University in Katowice. Its collections were created as a result of years of efforts by the local medical and pharmaceutical community, catalogued in 2013. The museum is housed in eight rooms within the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences (*Muzeum Medycyny i Farmacji Śląskiego Uniwersytetu Medycznego w Katowicach*, 2025).

Similar phenomena as depicted above could be observed in other European countries. An example of cooperation between the private sector is a museum in the Croatian city, Rijeka, where in 2020 the Museum of Pharmacy of the Adriatic-Galenic Laboratory (Croatian: Jadran-Galenski Laboratorij Muzej Farmacije) was founded by a pharmaceutical company, the JGL, in cooperation with local authorities and a municipal museum (Pintur, 2021, p. 337; JGL Muzej farmacije, 2025). European universities were also active in the field of museology. In 1994, the Faculty of Pharmacy of Charles University in Hradec Králové established the Czech Pharmaceutical Museum (Czech: České Farmaceutické Muzeum) in Kuks, which opened its first exhibition after two years of preparation (Farmaceutická

fakulta v Hradci Králové, 2025; Svatoš, 2019, pp. 34–42; Svatoš, 2025). In 2009, the Museum of the Medical and Pharmaceutical University of Iuliu Hațieganu (Romanian: Muzeul Școlii de Medicină și Farmacie Iuliu Hațieganu) was established in Cluj-Napoca, Romania (Bârsu, 2016, pp. 97–98).

CONCLUSIONS

The history of Polish pharmacy museums is, as one can see from the above overview, quite a complex and varied topic. There were a multitude of factors that impacted it, and these factors could vary on a regional basis, even from city to city. This is because it was individual efforts of driven and passionate people, pharmacists, who took pride in the history of their profession, that were so crucial in the process that led to the development of almost all pharmacy museums. A prominent example is Dr Stanisław Proń, who was instrumental in the establishment of the first national Polish pharmacy museum; however, there are numerous other characters comparable in merit. At the same time, Poland was affected by certain European-wide trends. The idea of establishing a pharmacy museum aligns with the common fascination with science in the second half of the 19th century as well as the desire to commemorate humanity's achievements in that field. Both world wars were a continent-spanning catastrophe for the field of museology, as many collections in Poland and in surrounding countries were looted or destroyed. Just as many other central European countries, Poland fell on the eastern side of the Iron Curtain, and the consequences of the influence of the Soviet overlord, nationalisation of pharmacies and suppression of independent initiatives, were a feature in each and every one of them and affected the environment in which the pharmacy museums were developing. The same can be said for the transformations after the fall of communism. The above indicates how the history of Polish pharmacy museums is both uniquely local, and also fits within the broader context of European museology. It straddles the line between *histoire événementielle* and wider socio-economic trends. One can reach the conclusion that it is aptly symbolic of the whole field of pharmacy and its rich history, which has explored many subjects, combined various sciences, and also had deeply personal, human aspects.

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SAŽETAK

Članak ocrtava povijest muzeja farmacije u Poljskoj preko širega europskog konteksta. Prvi naponi za osnivanje takve institucije datiraju iz druge polovice 19. stoljeća kada su, unatoč nedostatku poljske suverene države, poljski farmaceuti, strastveno vezani uza svoju profesiju, pozvali na stvaranje muzeja farmacije. Njihovi daljnji naponi naišli su na brojne prepreke, pri čemu su dva svjetska rata bila najgore od njih. Tijekom međuratnog razdoblja prikupljene su brojne zbirke, ali prvi poljski muzej farmacije osnovan je tek nakon Drugoga svjetskog rata, 1946., u Krakovu, zahvaljujući dr. Stanisławu Prońu. U 1970-ima i u drugim je poljskim gradovima, uključujući Lublin, Varšavu, Poznań, Bydgoszcz i Gdanjsk, osnovano niz manjih muzeja. Transformacija nakon pada željezne zavjese uzrokovala je privremenu krizu pri uspostavi i u radu muzeja farmacije u Poljskoj, a neke su ustanove ukinute zbog prestanka financiranja. Međutim, ubrzo nakon što se poljsko društvo naviknulo na nove okolnosti, obnovljeno je niz muzeja, čak su osnovani i novi, neki kao dio gradskih muzeja (Varšava, Bydgoszcz), neki u sklopu sveučilišta, a neke su čak financirale privatne tvrtke (Lublin, Łódź). Članak ilustrira koliko je bogato i jedinstveno područje poljske farmaceutske muzeologije, a istodobno promatra njegovu povezanost sa širom europskom stvarnošću.

Ključne riječi: muzeji farmacije, Poljska, muzeologija, povijest farmacije