

Special Article

Saint Luke the Physician, Archbishop of Crimea

Lambrini Kourkouta, PhD

Professor, Nursing Department, International University of Greece, Thessaloniki, Greece

Ioanna Papathanassiou, PhD

Associate Professor, General Department, University of Thessaly

Konstantinos Koukourikos, RN, MSc, PhDc

Lecturer, Nursing Department, International Hellenic University Thessaloniki, Greece

Christos Iliadis, RN

Private Diagnostic Health Center of Thessaloniki, Greece

Petros Ouzounakis, RN

University General Hospital of Alexandroupoli, Greece

Vassiliki Krepia, PhD

General Hospital "Sismanogleion", Athens, Greece

Areti Tsaloglidou, RN, MSc, PhD

Assistant Professor, Nursing Department, International Hellenic University Thessaloniki, Greece

Correspondence: Kourkouta Lambrini. Professor. Nursing Department. International University of Greece. Thessaloniki. Greece. P.O BOX 141. GR - 574 00 Thessaloniki GREECE. Email: laku1964@yahoo.gr

Abstract

Introduction: Studying the project of pioneers of science is particularly difficult when it comes to scientists with many special gifts, such as Saint Luke (secular name, Valentin Voino -Yasenetsky), Archbishop and Professor – Surgeon.

Purpose: The present historical study explores the life and scientific work of St. Luke the Physician.

Material and Method: A search and study of Saint Luke's life and his medical and historical literature was conducted through the electronic databases MEDLINE, IATROTEK and corresponding libraries

Results: Saint Luke (secular name, Valentin Voino -Yasenetsky) is a Saint of the Orthodox Church and was born on April 14, 1877 in Kerch, Crimea. In 1920 he was elected Professor of Anatomy and Surgery at the University of Tashkent. Saint Luke as a physician published forty scientific projects. He worked extensively in outpatient clinics, toured villages and undertook the responsibility of the surgical department. In 1921 he was ordained a priest and later in 1923 Bishop of Tashkent. He also remained chief doctor of Tashkent General Hospital. During World War II, he directed the Krasnoyarsk Military Hospital. From 1946 until June 11, 1961, the day he fell asleep in Lord, he was a metropolitan of Simferopol. His memory is commemorated by the Orthodox Church on June 11, the anniversary of his falling asleep in the Lord.

Conclusions: The life and work of St. Luke the Physician shows him as a rare gifted nature and temperament, who combined his medical knowledge and abilities with the love in practice, according to Christ, for his suffering fellow man.

Keywords: Saint Luke the physician, surgery, and scientific work.

Introduction

Studying the personality and work of science pioneers is not only intriguingly difficult but also dangerous, especially when it comes to scientists with many special gifts. When these scientific gifts are combined with Holiness, as the ultimate

expression of love and tenderness for the suffering person, then approaching such a personality is, ultimately, a bold but rewarding task. (Gr. Lakiotis. 2014)

Such a personality was the physician surgeon Valentin Felixovic Vojno-Yasenetsky, Professor

of Topographic Anatomy and Surgery at the University of Tashkent, Archbishop of Simferopol and Crimea, our intimate Saint Luke the Physician. It is a timeless symbol of Man, Scientist and Physician - Surgeon. (Gr. Lakiotis. 2014)

The medical and surgical, research and human-centred way of the Saint's thinking, perception and action is truly endless. Except of being an enlightened Hierarch and a great Scientist and Researcher, he was, with regard to the daily practice of medicine, a gifted Surgeon.

The purpose of this historical study is to explore the life, as well as the scientific, medical and surgical work of St. Luke the Physician.

Methods

A search and study of Saint Luke's life and his medical and historical literature was conducted through the electronic databases MEDLINE, IATROTEK and corresponding libraries using the following key words: Saint Luke the physician, surgery, and scientific work.

Talking About Saint Luke the Physician

Saint Lucas, world-famous Valentin Felixovich Voyno-Yasenetsky, was born on April 14/27, 1877, in Kerch - the ancient Greek Ponticapaeum -in Crimea. The family environment in which he grew up was peculiar, as his father was a Roman Catholic, while his mother, though Orthodox, confined herself only to good deeds. (Gr. Lakiotis. 2014)

They moved to Kiev very early. In 1898 he began his studies at the Medical School of the University of Kiev. He completed his studies with his degree "Excellent" in 1903, with the specialty of surgeon. He immediately began having surgeries, mainly eye diseases. That era, trachoma was very widespread due to which many people were blind. Valentine applied a difficult method and gave light to thousands of people. (Antonopoulos. 2017)

In 1904, with the outbreak of the Russian-Japanese War, he served as a volunteer at the Red Cross Battalion in the Far East. They settled in the city of Chita and took over the surgical department of the military hospital, where he performed from the simplest to the most serious operations with incredible ease. In this town he met Anna Vasilievna Lanskaya, his future wife, with whom he had four (4) children. After the war he worked in various provincial hospitals.

He had to be a surgeon and a gynecologist, a pathologist and a pediatrician, a hygienist and a dentist. His successes are so many, and patients are arriving from everywhere. (Karvelas. 2018)

His major problem was general anesthesia, because there were no anesthesiologists and the right tools, resulting anesthesia to be more dangerous than the surgery itself. Around 1909 he devised a new method of local anesthesia in the sciatic nerve. By his own method he made 538 surgeries with great success. He later submitted this project as a dissertation and it was approved with honors. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki>)

In 1910 he moved to Perezlavl Zalessky, where working conditions were not good at all. It was a 50-bedded hospital without electricity and x-ray machine. The water was brought to him by the water seller in a barrel every morning. He had surgeries for several hours, about 650 surgeries a year, including kidney, stomach, bile, even heart, and brain surgeries with great success. The evening was enclosed in his office and under the dim light of an oil lamp he continued his scientific studies, publishing several scientific articles. (Diakakis. 2019)

He has published a total of **40 scientific projects**. Indicative titles of Saint's articles are the following (Balogiannis. 2015):

1. Facial elephantiasis as a result of Neuromatosis, Journal of Surgery, 1908
2. The most appropriate methods of anesthesia in therapeutic intervention efforts during the practice of medicine in rural areas, Medical Journal 1908
3. Case of recurrent strangulated inguinal hernia, Surgery 1908
4. Local Anesthesia on Neck, Tongue and Upper Jaw Surgery, Proceedings of the Moscow Surgical Company, 1909
5. Regional Anesthesia, Proceedings of the Tambov Medical Physiology Society, 1909
6. Hematogenous rib sarcoma, Surgery, 1910
7. The surgical treatment of spinal fractures, Surgery, 1910
8. Assessment of the surgical supply at the Romanov Hospital during the years 1909-1910
9. Primary native vertebral osteomyelitis, Surgery, 1911

10. Bilateral damage to the pulmonary gastric nerve, Surgery, 1911
 11. Second case of temporary blindness after novocaine adrenaline injection in the eye cavity, Central Journal for Surgery, 1911
 12. Assessment of the surgical supply at the Hospital of the Province of Peregislav, 1911
 13. Litungs sciatic nerve anesthesia, Central Journal for Surgery, 1912
 14. Assessment of the surgical supply at the Hospital of the Province of Peregislav during the years 1912-1913
 15. Local anesthesia in the sciatic and middle nerves, Proceedings of the XIIIth Congress of Russian Surgeons, 1912
 16. Assessment of the surgical supply at the Hospital of the Province of Peregislav in 1914
 17. The surgical treatment of brain tumor cases, Proceedings of the Kiev Surgical Company in 1914
 18. Local anesthesia in surgery of the hand cysts, Medical Journal, 1915
 19. Regional Anesthesia, Doctoral Thesis, honored with the Heinzig Prize in 1915
 20. Therapeutic treatment of lateral cartilage lesions, Surgical Messenger, 1923
 21. Stopping the bleeding of the vessels with extirpation of the spleen, Journal of surgery 1923
 22. The surgical treatment of large joints empyema, Surgical Messenger, 1924
 23. Topographic anatomy of inguinal and external iliac lymph nodes and the technique of their surgical exception, Turkmen Journal of Medicine, Volume 1, issue 2
 24. The dangers of the Mamburg method, Turkmen Journal of Medicine, Volume 1, Issue 7
 25. Treating the purulent collections through Valnef's poultices, Surgery 1957: 127-135
 26. Essays on surgery of pyogenic infections, First edition 1934, second edition 1943
 27. Our experience in the treatment of osteomyelitis, as a result of gunshot wounds in the hospitals of the advanced line, 1943
 28. Late excisions of joints in infected gunshot wounds, Moscow 1944
 29. On the sepsis of wounds, Proceedings of a military hospital in Voronezh, 1945
 30. On hematogenous osteomyelitis, 1946-1947
 31. On the treatment of chronic encephalitis caused by gunshot wounds, 1947
 32. On the pathogenesis and treatment of callus, Soviet Medicine, 1953
 33. Essays on the surgery of pyogenic infections, Third edition, 1956
- Towards the end of his stay in Peregislav, Zaleski decided to deal with the surgery of pyogenic infections, for which very few things were taught at the University. (Ar. Nektarios. 2014)
- In 1917 he moved to Tashkent, where he was appointed Chief physician of the surgical department of the state hospital, and in 1918 he was actively involved in the establishment of the University of Tashkent, where he was elected professor of topographic anatomy and surgery. At that time, due to the Russian revolution, the political situation was uncontrollable. A morning while he was entering the operating room, he was arrested and sentenced to death. After 16 hours of waiting, he was left free. Instead of returning home, he went to the hospital and entered the operating room at midnight and started performing surgeries.
- This adventure affected the health of his wife, who was already suffering from tuberculosis, and a few days later she died. (Metropolitan Nektarios. 2016)
- In this era, the physician was actively involved in the life of the Church. He publicly defended the archbishop of Tashkent and Turkestan Innocent, who ordained him a deacon on January 26, 1921 and a week later a presbyter. For this fact, Bishop Luke was arrested. He was accused of treason and hurt. In prison he also had the opportunity to complete his book, "**Essays on the Surgery of Pyogenic Infections**," which, however, was not published for many years because the author insisted that his ecclesiastical identity had to be written on the book cover. (Kourkouta et al. 2018)
- Bishop Lucas departed in exile for Siberia. The regime installed him in the city of Yeniseysk, to later send him another 2,000 km away to the city of Turukhansk where he offered his medical services, despite the adverse conditions. (Sfyroera. 2015)

The love of the people in him forced the regime to send him beyond the Arctic Circle, to the village of Plachino, where during the winter solstice the sun does not rise. However, the reactions of the people brought him back to Turukhansk where he continued his work in the hospital.

It is notable that in Geniseisk he attempted an innovative and very difficult operation. They brought him a young man with severe renal failure in a desperate situation. The bishop, having no alternative, attempted a kidney transplant from a calf to the young patient, despite the meager means available. The operation was described as successful, with no further details on how long the patient lived, postoperative complications, etc. Although it was the first transplant operation, it was not widely known for political reasons. (Antonopoulos. 2019)

He finally was left free in November 1925 and after many difficulties returned to Tashkent, where he worked as a private doctor, alongside to his hierarchical duties. After a while, the bishop found himself again accountable to the party. After exhausting interrogations and hunger strikes and after spending a year in prison, the bishop was once again exiled to Northern Russia, to the city of Kotlas, where he was allowed to perform surgeries because of the amount of needs.

In 1932 he developed a tumor and went to St. Petersburg, where he underwent surgery. He was offered the direction of the country's largest surgical research center, as long as he pulled out the race of the priest and denied Christ. (Antonopoulos. 2008) He refused and returned to his place of exile. During this period of spiritual probation, he begins to lose the sight in his left eye due to detachment of the retina. ((Metropolitan Nektarios. 2016)

In 1934 he published his book "**Essays on the surgery of pyogenic infections**" where he signed as "Bishop Luke." The book was received with enthusiasm and received successive editions. This book showed not only the author's scientific background, but also his love for patients. (Antonopoulos. 2011)

The following are the contents of St. Luke's book (Kourkouta et al. 2018):

- ❖ Medicine and ethics. The physician and his duty. Health and faith

- ❖ Infected scalp injuries. Phlegmon. Osteomyelitis of the skull bones
- ❖ Furuncles and carbuncles
- ❖ Purulent eye diseases
- ❖ Deep purulent inflammations of the face. Phlegmon of the orbit
- ❖ Deep phlegmons of the face
- ❖ Parotitis. Septic inflammation of the oral cavity and pharynx
- ❖ Periostitis and osteomyelitis of the jaws
- ❖ Purulent otitis media and its complications "
- ❖ Neck inflammations
- ❖ Axillary inflammation
- ❖ Purulent inflammation of arm joint
- ❖ Inflammations of the arm and forearm
- ❖ Purulent inflammation of the elbow joint
- ❖ Inflammation of the fingers, limbs hands and forearms. Inflammation of the wrist
- ❖ Chest inflammation. Osteomyelitis of clavicle and scapula
- ❖ Osteomyelitis of the ribs. Decomposition processes in the lateral cartilage
- ❖ Vertebral osteomyelitis
- ❖ Mastitis
- ❖ Purulent pleurisy
- ❖ Lung abscess

The Saint's book on pyogenic infections was honored on the one hand by the Stalin Prize in 1946, and on the other hand was published three times during the Saint's life. The third edition was in 1956, five years before his falling asleep in Lord. (Metropolitan Nektarios. 2016)

At one point he wrote: "When starting the physical examination, the doctor must keep in mind not only the abdomen, but the patient as a whole, to whom unfortunately doctors usually refer to as a "case ". That's why you need to relieve him/ her from the stress and psychological pressure. The patient should not see the operating table, ready-made tools, people in medical blouses, face masks and hand gloves. Sleep him out of the operating room." Professor Zhikov wrote in 1954: "Voyno-Yasenetsky's books were of particular interest because they were accompanied by sketches and photos, so we had a better idea of how we could put his methods into practice. He had a camera and he was taking pictures of the course of the surgery when it was necessary." (Despoti. 2017)

In June 21, 1941, Hitler's troops invaded Russia, and the bishop, although in exile, offered himself to work for the treatment of injured. The Soviet

Communist Party acknowledging his value as a physician appointed him chief physician of the military hospital and councilor of all the Krasnoyarsk Hospitals. In the spring of 1942 he was promoted to archbishop of Krasnoyarsk. (Mouratidis. 1968)

When the Germans withdrew, the archbishop moved further west to Tambov, where he was in charge of 150 military hospitals. To make it easier for him, the Church transferred him to the Archdiocese of Tambov and Mitsurinsk.

In 1946, Archbishop Luke was honored with the Stalin Prize for his heroic work in Second World War, and for his great contribution to medical science. The ceremony took place in Moscow. He himself abstained from the award. The 200,000 rubles of the prize, at his own urging, were distributed to the orphans of the war. (Seraphim. 2019)

At the age of 70, he became archbishop of Simferopol and Crimea. In the spring of 1952 his eyesight worsened and in early 1956 was permanently blind. The archbishop was already 84 years old. He sensed his end and at Christmas of 1960 he had his last surgery. On Sunday, June 11, 1961, All Saints' Day in Russia, Archbishop Luke Voyno-Yasenetsky fell asleep in the Lord. (Nikolakaki. 2016)

In November 1995, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church proclaimed him a saint. His memory is honored by the Orthodox Church on June 11, the anniversary of his falling asleep in the Lord.

Evaluation of the Scientific Work of Saint Luke the Physician

Valentin Voyno-Yasenetsky, a physician and professor of surgery and topographic anatomy, did not limit himself to successful or unsuccessful brain and skull surgical efforts, but expanded his neurosurgical field scientifically and surgically. He treated a large number of patients at a time when there was no Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and the current means, which help and largely contribute decisively to the final treatment and prognosis of the surgical and especially the neurosurgeon patient (Despoti. 2000) This effort, or rather this surgical daring, is not due to ignorance of the risk or ignorance of Neuroanatomy. On the contrary, it is due to specialized knowledge of the anatomy of the brain, skull and cranial space, as well as a deep knowledge of the patient's clinical picture.

Typically, the Saint himself mentions a case of a patient who operated on the anatomical area of the mastoid process and the sigmoid sinus: "... a lot of attention is needed, but this attention should not be turned into hesitation or fear." Elsewhere, describing again the perforation of the mastoid process in relation to the topographic anatomical position of the facial nerve, he states: "In order to drill the mastoid process with confidence and boldness, there must be a clear understanding of the topography of the facial nerve in the temporal bone, and accurate knowledge of the topography of the nerve can only be achieved by direct study of a corpse." Finally, on the same subject of deep and specific knowledge of Anatomy, Saint Luke states in another point: "We always keep in mind that we must perform a strictly anatomical surgery, which gives a huge benefit if done properly and completely, but it may be accompanied by severe and irreparable damage, if carried out carelessly and without sufficient knowledge of anatomy". (Oikonomou. 2003)

In Saint Luke's project, it can be clearly found specialized knowledge of the Neurosurgery specialty, but also very specific descriptions of intraoperative findings from his brain surgeries. More specifically, Saint himself uses and clarifies the terms "intracranial - intracerebral - extracerebral pathology", "intracranial pressure", "epidural abscess", "subdural empyema", "subarachnoid space". (Sfyroera. 2015) Elsewhere, he states: "With a cross-sectional opening, we opened the dura mater. The brain surface has a congestive view" and he continues "...the sigmoid sinus and the non-pulsating dura mater of the of the posterior cranial fossa were widely revealed ". Finally, in relation to his great neurosurgical knowledge, it is worth mentioning his experience, regarding the risk of bleeding from the venous sinuses of the dura mater.

He also mentions: "...because the bleeding from the venous sinuses of the dura mater may be really awful even for the experienced and daring surgeon. Thus, we must take measures in advance to avoid bleeding. In this case, there is an excellent method...". He continues describing it. His description can technically benefit the Neurosurgeon even today. Both great and modern is the knowledge that Saint Luke offers. (Metropolitan Nektarios. 2014)

St. Luke had, among others, the educational charisma related to scientific education and

surgical training of young physicians, especially surgeons. Saint Luke stresses and points out that a very basic precondition for anatomical knowledge and surgical education is "the immediate study of a corpse". Nowadays, the respective European and International Scientific Societies, as certified scientific bodies with responsibility in surgery and surgical education of specialists and young specialized surgeons of various surgical specialties, offer it, in the form of practical surgical exercises (Surgical Workshops on a corpse), as additional education and training for acquiring surgical knowledge, confidence and skills. (Metropolitan Nektarios. 2014)

The scientific methodology and practice of the Saint includes (Karvelas. 2018):

- the clinical description of the patient's pathology,
- the anatomical plan as a preoperative scientific reflection regarding the surgical approach that will be followed,
- the surgical description and, finally,
- the research documentation, which is so relevant that it remains as a modern way of transmitting knowledge to international Universities, where Neurosurgery is now taught as a separate medical specialty.

Finally, St. Luke did not cure diseases but his patients and sufferer fellow human beings. This should be for every physician, who very often is called upon to manage human suffering, an enormous moral and spiritual legacy. The Surgery Professor and Archpriest G. L. Shevchenko mentions: "Voino-Yasenetsky taught his assistants" human surgery. " There are reports that show how carefully the patient was treated, for example: "In preparing for surgery, we need to keep in mind the patient as a whole, but unfortunately doctors usually refer to him/her as " an incident" or " a case". At that point, it is clearly demonstrated that Professor Voino-Yasenetsky, our familiar Saint Luke the Physician, examined, operated and cured Man as an Image of the Triune God and did not solely deal with the pathology causing the disease. (Metropolitan Nektarios. 2014)

Conclusion

The Lord in the person of St. Luke blessed and elevated the science of medicine and human research, as long as it remains constantly connected with faith and knowledge.

The multifaceted and charismatic Personality of the 20th Century, St. Luke the Physician, is outlined in a variety of personal clinical experiences and descriptions that constitute a corpus of scientific knowledge such as applied Anatomy, clinical practice and surgery. Valentin Voino-Yasenetsky dared to operate and treat patients with very difficult and severe pathologies, which are now treated in conditions of maximum and advanced medical safety for the patient. The life and work of St. Luke the Physician shows him as a rare gifted nature and temperament, who combined his medical knowledge and abilities with the love in practice, according to Christ, for his suffering fellow man. Saint Luke is a model academic, teacher, scientist, thinker, writer, physician and high priest. Through human suffering and uninterrupted prayer was holding the truth in his heart. In the light of his eternal God, with which continuously lived, he demonstrated through his work the unsurpassed beauty of scientific thought and offering, when it is shined by faith and love.

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