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IGNAZ SEMMELWEIS

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Summary

The article about honorary to Professor Ignaz Semmelweis, the savior of the mothers.

Key words

Ignaz Semmelweis, puerperal fever, Obstetrics, hygiene.

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Conflict of interests

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ИГНАЦ ЗЕММЕЛЬВЕЙС

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Резюме

Статья о почетном профессоре И. Земмельвейсе, спасителе матерей.

Ключевые слова

Игнац Земмельвейс, родильная горячка, акушерство, гигиена.

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In honorary to Professor Ignaz Semmelweis, the savior of the mothers. Now 150 years ago, that the Hungarian physician died on a disease what is near to the puerperal fever, which he tried to eliminate. His work is always in connection with puerperal fever and the delitate behavior of his colleagues.

He was born on July 1st 1818 in Budapest Hungarian. His father, Josef Semmelweis, was born in Eisenstadt, now belonging to Austria. Ignaz Semmelweis studied at first law at the University of Vienna but he switched later to medicine. His doctor degree in medicine he achieved in 1844 in Vienna. Some of his teachers attained world fame like Carl von Rokitansky, Joseph Skoda and Ferdinand von Hebra. On the other side there was Professor Johann Klein, who was the chief of the first Obstetrics clinic of the Viennese General Hospital. Later he intrigued against Ignaz Semmelweis.

To understand the situation of the mothers at Vienna General Hospital you have to know, that there were two Obstetrical clinics situated at the General hospital. The first clinic was led by doctors and the second Obstetrics department was led by midwives. The maternal mortality rate was at that time about 10% due to puerperal fever at the first department. The first obstetrics department was free of charge for the patients because they had to be subjects for the training of students, doctors and midwives. The second department had a mortality rate from less than 4%. So the mothers decided to give birth rather on street than in hospital.

The realization was coming to Semmelweis in 1847, when his friend Jakob Kolletschka died after an injury during postmortem section. The disease was similar to the puerperal fever. In conclusion he found that doctors and students making autopsies, transfer "cadaverous particles" from the corpse to the mothers. In that year the mortality rate was 18,3%. He introduced in May to use calcium hypochlorite for hand washing before examination of the mothers. In June the death rate dropped to 2,2%.

But that was in conflict with the medical authorities. He had to leave Vienna and moved to Budapest, Hungary. He became Professor for Obstetrician at the University of Pest, today called "Semmelweis University". 1861 he published a 500 pages book about puerperal fever, but the reaction of this colleagues were negative. Nobody believed him and his theories about hygiene, because that was in contraversion to the established theories about the diseases.

He began to write open angry letters against the obstetricians, professors at the universities, who did not believe him. He boosted up his anger about the ignorance to his realization for the mother death rate. That all concluded that he lost his mind and his wife brought him to an asylum (Brünnfeld, Vienna, 9th district) where he died shortly thereafter, August 13th, 1865 because of sepsis after he was hidden and injured by male nurses. He was buried in Budapest.

Later he became world famous as savior of mothers.

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