

On the biography of Professor E.A. Uspensky (1901–1977)

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Abstract. This article is dedicated to the life and work of Professor E.A. Uspensky – doctor of medical sciences, medical service colonel and head of the department of pathological anatomy at N.I. Pirogov Odessa Medical Institute. His life is typical of representatives of the Russian intelligentsia, who have received their higher education in the early years of Soviet government. A graduate of the 1st Moscow University, Uspensky was sent to work in the Lipetsk region. Then, at the Leningrad Institute of Advanced Medical Studies, under the leadership of Professor B.S. Doynikov, he worked on pathomorphology of the central and peripheral nervous system.

As a military doctor, Uspensky took part in the Soviet-Finnish War and the Great Patriotic War, which largely determined the direction of his subsequent scientific work. His areas of interest were neuropathology and histoneurology of gunshot wounds. Uspensky's military medical work was included in the founding publication "Soviet medical experience in the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945", which provided an insightful and comprehensive analysis of the issues of military pathology. After the war, his attention was focused on the study of the morphology of cancer processes in the nervous system and the nature of the morphological changes in it when tumor metastases are present.

In the last stage of his career, Uspensky headed the department of pathological anatomy at the Odessa Medical Institute and was engaged in research and teaching activities.

Keywords: E.A. Uspensky, life and work, the Great Patriotic War, the history of pathological anatomy, the history of medicine

For quotation: *Vasylyev K.K., Vasylyev Y.K. On the biography of Professor E.A. Uspensky (1901–1977). History of Medicine. 2015. Vol. 2. № 4. P. 457–462.*

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Evgeny Aleksandrovich Uspensky was a professor, doctor of medical sciences, medical service colonel and head of the department of pathological anatomy at N.I. Pirogov Odessa Medical Institute (present-day Odessa National Medical University; ONMU) from 1956 to 1973. He graduated from the Faculty of Medicine at the 1st Moscow University (present-day I.M. Sechenov First Moscow Medical University) in 1926.

The purpose of this work is to shed light on the life and work of Professor E.A. Uspensky, relying not only on his scientific legacy and the available published data [1–5], but also archival materials (the professor's personal files from the ONMU archive).¹

¹ The Archive of Odessa National Medical University, fund 2730 (E.A. Uspensky's private file). 143 l.

Received: 30.03.15

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Uspensky was born on November 12, 1901, (November 25 by the Gregorian calendar) in the town of Borisoglebsk in the Tambov province (a present-day regional center in the Voronezh region), to the family of a school teacher. His father, Alexander Pavlovich Uspensky (1859–1915) was born in the village of Sukmanovka (in the present-day Zherdevsky District in the Tambov region), which was 64 kilometers from the county town of Borisoglebsk, and over the course of 36 years he was in charge of the 1st city elementary school in Borisoglebsk. He held the rank of provincial secretary.² His mother, Anna Uspenskaya (née Ivanova; 1861–1941), a native of the *volost* village of Elan-Koleno in the Novochoopersk County of the Voronezh province (present-day Novochoopersk district in the Voronezh region), never worked outside the home; she ran the household and raised the

² He died May 13, 1915.

children. She died shortly after the beginning of Russia's participation in World War II (August 1941) in Borisoglebsk at 80 years of age. E.A. Uspensky had five sisters and two brothers: Anna (1880–1922), Maria (1888–post 1970), Alexander (1890–1942), Serafim (1892–1949), Nina (1894–1966), Raisa (1898–1919) and Nikolai (1900–1918).³

E.A. Uspensky's elder brother, Alexander, was a doctor, which apparently influenced E.A. Uspensky's choice of profession. In 1916, Alexander Uspensky graduated from the Medical Faculty at the Kharkov University and was drafted into the army (during World War I). In the early 1920s, he worked as a district physician in the Voronezh region and was then promoted to chief physician of the city hospital in Morshansk (in the present-day Tambov region) [6, p. 704].

E. A. Uspensky received his primary education in his hometown, and in 1911 enrolled in the boy's grammar school at Borisoglebsk, from which he graduated in the Soviet era at school level II, in May 1919. In the same year he was admitted to the medical faculty of the 1st Moscow University.

At university, Uspensky attended lectures by Grigory Ivanovich Rossolimo (1860–1928), and perhaps it was this professor who instilled in the student Uspensky an interest in neurology (or neuropathology as it was called at the time). In the spring of 1926, Uspensky successfully passed his exams and the State Qualification Commission at the Medical Faculty of the 1st Moscow University awarded him the qualification of doctor.

Uspensky was appointed doctor for the railway zone at Gryazi station in the South Eastern Railways (present-day Gryazi-Voronezh station in the Lipetsk region). In May of the following year, he was transferred to Lipetsk, to the post of neurologist at a local clinic. In January 1930, his stint working in the provinces came to an end: Uspensky received a scholarship while studying at university and according to the decision of the Council of the People's Commissars of the

RSFSR of March 24, 1926, on the reimbursement procedure for expenses incurred by the state for supporting scholarship holders, from October 1, 1922, to January 1, 1924, he was supposed to work on compulsory assignment. In order to improve his qualifications, he moved to Leningrad, where, under the guidance of Professor Mikhail Ivanovich Astvatsaturov (1876/1877–1936) he began working as an intern at the neurological department of the I.I. Mechnikov Hospital. There he conducted a number of case studies on epidemic meningitis, the results of which were included in his first scientific publication, which appeared in the Soviet Medical Newspaper [7].

In 1932, Uspensky specialized in pathological anatomy at the Leningrad Institute of Medical Professional Development. His research interests focused on pathomorphology of the nervous system. In April 1932, he was appointed a research fellow at the department of normal and pathological morphology of the nervous system at the All-Union Institute of Experimental Medicine (AUIEM, Leningrad), led by Professor Boris Semenovich Doynikov (1879-1948), who was carrying out a large-scale systematic study on the pathomorphology of the central and peripheral nervous system. Doynikov assigned Uspensky the task of studying the pathomorphology of the nervous system in cases of rabies, both in animals and humans [8]. Based on the study of the central and peripheral nervous system of a person suffering from rabies, Uspensky produced for the first time a detailed description of the topographic distribution of histological changes, demonstrating that the disease process spreads not only in the brain and spinal cord but encroaches on many peripheral sensory and autonomic ganglia, as well as nerve trunks. In order to study the dynamics of morphological changes with rabies, he carried out a number of experimental studies with fixed rabies virus in laboratory animals, which allowed him to discover the development sequence for pathological changes in rabies. In 1935, the findings on changes in the nervous system with rabies were included in a report by Uspensky at the meeting of the AUIEM Academic Council, who awarded him the degree of candidate of medical sciences. One of the council members was Ivan Petrovich Pavlov. The results of studies on the pathomorphology of the nervous system in cases of rabies by Uspensky were published [9–10] including in the monographic

³ Nikolai was a student of the Petrograd Polytechnic Institute; younger sister Raisa worked as a rural teacher, his elder sister Anna was also a teacher and was in charge of a primary school for girls in Borisoglebsk. Serafim worked for many years as senior researcher at the Hydrological Institute in Leningrad. Sister Maria worked as a bibliographer in the same institute. Nina worked in the office of the registrar at the University of Leningrad.

work “On the topographic distribution of histopathological changes in the nervous system of a person with rabies” [11]. In 1939, he was awarded the academic title of senior researcher with a specialization in histology.

Uspensky participated in the Soviet-Finnish war of 1939–1940 (on September 1, 1939, he was drafted into the Red Army). As a military doctor, Uspensky analyzed and later published data on firearms injuries of the spine based on autopsy results [12].

In April 1940, on the order of the Leningrad Regional Military Commissariat, Uspensky was retained by the department of pathological anatomy at the S.M. Kirov Military Medical Academy (MMA) in Leningrad. On July 7, 1941, with the mobilization of the MMA in connection with the beginning of Russia’s participation in World War II, he was appointed assistant head of the pathologic anatomical laboratory (PAL) for the Leningrad Front. In 1943, Uspensky became the head of the pathologic anatomical department of the newly organized Military Medical Museum (MMM), where he served until August 20, 1954, when he was demobilized. The MMM became the only scientific research institution in the country that was not only a unique museum with a rich collection (including pathologic anatomical samples), but also a training center for military physicians [13].

The pathologic anatomical department, headed by Uspensky, held a special position at the MMM. It was one of the first created. It held more than 6,000 pathologic anatomical samples from combat traumas and their complications, as well as diseases of military personnel. Each sample was accompanied by a pathologic anatomical passport, which presented data on the primary scientific processing of the sample with radiological and histological examination of the affected organ and with macrophotograms and microphotograms. In addition, a significant number of samples from forensic medical examinations was collected in the department’s archives. Much attention was paid to the medical records, which provided study materials from various points of view. Employees of Uspensky’s department were also engaged in producing artistic sketches of pathological samples, some of which were used as illustrations in the Encyclopedic Dictionary of Military Medicine (six volumes, 1946–1950)

and in sections of the seminal work *Experience of Soviet Medicine in the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945*, which contained a deep and comprehensive analysis of not only clinical issues, but also issues of military pathology.

On March 26, 1946, the USSR Council of Ministers issued a decree on the scientific development and assimilation of the experience of Soviet medicine during World War II. *Experience of Soviet Medicine in the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945* was created in part on the basis of the rich materials gathered in AMM. The release of the multi-volume work demanded numerous illustrations in the form of color and gray-tone sketches drawn from real-life pathological samples. The pathologic anatomical department’s team at the MMM, which was led by Uspensky, created and edited all the archive’s illustrative pathologic anatomical materials that were included in *Experience of Soviet Medicine in Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945*. When editorial work began on the publication it was given 107 color pictures. Then, under the leadership of the scientific research division, a further 164 color and 138 gray-tone images were prepared [14].

During World War II, Uspensky paid great attention to the study of the nervous system’s wound healing process. Having collected extensive material, he wrote two sections in *Experience of Soviet Medicine in the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945*: “On Pathological Anatomy of penetrating skull injuries” (in the fourth volume) and “Pathological anatomy of gunshot wounds and injuries of the spine and spinal cord” (in the 11th volume) [15, 16]. The author not only described changes in the nervous system in cases of gunshot injuries, but also various pathological processes that occur in the internal organs, often as a manifestation of septic diseases that occur with injuries. These works largely expanded insights into the development of the wound healing process in the nervous system and were produced in line with the new division of pathological anatomy, devoted to the neuromorphology and neurohistology of gunshot wounds. Thus, he continued and developed the scientific field of his Leningrad teachers – Astvatsaturov and Doynikov.

The N.I. Pirogov Estate Museum in Vinnitsa was opened as a branch of the MMM. In December 1950, in connection with the 140th anniversary of the birth of Pirogov, a scientific session was

held at Vinnitsa, in which Uspensky participated with a report on clinical and pathological data in diffuse metastatic cancer of the nervous system.

Uspensky was awarded the “Order of the Red Star”, “For the Defense of Leningrad”, “For Victory Over Germany in the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945”, “For Military Merit”, “30 Years of the Soviet Army and Navy”, “20 Years of Victory of the Great Patriotic War”, “50 Years of the Armed Forces of the USSR”, “For Valorous Work. Commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the Birth of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin” and “For Labor Valor”.

Uspensky’s postwar life saw him pay much attention to the study of the morphology of cancer processes in the nervous system. He studied the special characteristics of all parts of the nervous system in cases of cancer of the internal organs. Furthermore, he used the so-called method of total histological examination developed by Professor Doynikov. As a result of the large amount of pathologic anatomical material processed by Uspensky, our knowledge on this subject has been enriched in three ways: the nature of morphological changes in the nervous system in the presence of tumor metastasis were studied in detail; a detailed description was given of morphological changes in the nervous system of patients with cancer of the internal organs as a result of the action of the primary cancer site; new metastatic processes of cancer of the internal organs in the nervous system were explored and identified. Uspensky built on this work a principle of clinical-morphological parallels, and furthermore in the clinical field, he clearly described the symptomatology of lesions of the nervous system in cases of cancer of the internal organs. He outlined very detailed macroscopic and histological characteristics of cancer metastases in the nervous system, in the bones of the cranial vault and the spine [17–19]. As a result of many years of work, Uspensky wrote and defended in April 1953 his doctoral dissertation on “Cancer metastases in the nervous system”. The Higher Attestation Commission for degrees of doctor of science on October 3, 1953 awarded him the degree of doctor of medicine [20].

In the postwar years, Uspensky held workshops on special topics of pathological anatomy for Military Medical Academy students, as well as with students of the Department of Pathological

Anatomy at the Leningrad Institute of Medical Professional Development.

After the demobilization, the former scope of Uspensky’s work no longer satisfied him and he filed a petition to lead the department. On April 11, 1956, Uspensky was assigned to head the department of pathological anatomy of N.I. Pirogov Odessa Medical Institute (OMI) and March 27, 1957, the Higher Attestation Commission awarded him the academic rank of professor of pathological anatomy.⁴

Professor Uspensky headed the Odessa Regional Scientific Society of Pathologists and periodically published reports on the society’s activities in the Archives of Pathology magazine [21–23]. He was elected an honorary member of the All-Union Scientific Society of Pathologists at the Fifth All-Union Congress of Pathologists (Yerevan, 1961).

One of Uspensky’s students from Odessa was Professor Anatoly Ivanovich Danilenko (born in 1937). From his 3rd year at OMI until his graduation in 1961, he actively participated in the work of the student scientific club at the department of pathological anatomy. The later life and activities of Danilenko have been inextricably linked with this department, which he headed from 1984 to 2007 [24]. Another student of Uspensky was Professor Alexander Georgievich Popov (born 1941), an OMI pupil, who received his postgraduate education at the department of pathological anatomy under Professor Uspensky. He headed the department of operative surgery and topographic anatomy at ONMU from 1992 to 2014 [25].

Uspensky passed away in Odessa on January 31, 1977, and was buried at the Second Christian Cemetery (in the 31st section).

And thus, the journey through life of Professor Uspensky (1901–1977) was typical for that of a Russian intellectual of the last century, the fate of whom was inextricably linked with the historical fate of his homeland. He was born into a traditional large intellectual family, but during the years of civil war, destruction and widespread epidemics, his brother and two sisters died of infectious diseases. His youth fell within the period of the empire’s collapse, when it seemed that

⁴ In Odessa, Uspensky lived at the following address: 11 Street Pastera, Apt. 31.

Russia would be lost forever. In the 1920s, during the country's revival, Uspensky was a student at Moscow University, worked as a doctor and began his research activities. For the people of his generation (born in the early 20th century), it was typical that World War II provided a particular direction for their scientific work. So if prior to the war, Uspensky was researching pathomorphology of nervous system in cases of rabies, during the war he began to study the wound healing process in the nervous system, and the neuromorphology and neurohistology of gunshot wounds. The work

of Professor Uspensky on military medicine, as well as the research of many other domestic medical scientists, was included in the seminal 35-volume publication *Experience of Soviet Medicine in Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945*.

At the last stage of his scientific career, as a pathologist, Uspensky took the chair of pathological anatomy at OMI. As a representative of Doynikov's Leningrad (Saint Petersburg) school of pathomorphology, Professor Uspensky continued the scientific traditions of the northern capital's pathologists in Odessa.

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