

An Excursion Into the Medical Activity of Doctor Gheorghe Marinescu

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Gheorghe Marinescu (February 28, 1863, Bucharest – May 15, 1938, Bucharest) was a Romanian neurologist, founder of the Romanian School of Neurology.



Before taking an excursion into the rich activity of Doctor Marinescu, we find it interesting to mention several traits that define this man. Therefore, those who closely knew him can say that, at first sight, Gh. Marinescu came across as an enigmatic quiet sphinx, imposing through the expressions on his face. But, if you won his trust, he would become communicative, spiritual and genial through the irony that characterized him.

Fatherless, Marinescu is guided, at his mother's insistences and due to precarious means, towards becoming a priest, entering the seminary. Acquiring ethical and moral verticality, he then attends the Polytechnic School and then the classes

of the Faculty of Medicine, with Victor Babes as one of his professors. In order to fathom his knowledge, he studies abroad for eight years while working for two great hospitals: the Săpăletrițe Hospital, run by the famous Charcot, and the Hôtel-Dieu Hospital. Returning to the country, he will make the best use of what he had previously learned, in the Pantelimon and Colentina hospitals.

Gh. Marinescu, Romanian neurologist and founder of the Romanian School of Neurology has been one of the first doctors in the world to apply histologic, histopathologic and anatomoclinics in the scientific research in the field of neurology. Important original contributions are made in the field of fiziology, histopathology and the practical learning of the nervous system (the theory of reflex trophicity, the palmomentony reflex, kinetoplasma, chromatolysis, neuronophagy) [1].

Dedicating himself to laboratory research for four decades, he studies the poliomyelitic and hepatic viruses, spirochete of Schaudin in the brain. Using ultramicroscopic research, he applied the data of the colloidal theory to the neuron structure. He also used experimental methods, such as transplant and cultures of nervous tissue. He improves a method of studying oxidative ferments in the nerve cells and shows the importance of these ferments to the understanding of the degeneration and regeneration phenomena in the nervous system. By using the method of retrograde degenerations, he has made contributions to the practice of localizing certain nervous formations, such as the nucleus of the pneumogastric nerve, the facial nerve, etc.

Due to his vast knowledge in the field of physiology, serology and medical chemistry, he is among the first ones to use the technique of the Bordet-Wassermann reaction to diagnose nervous syphilis. He uses the method of conditioned reflexes in the study of hysteria, epilepsy, aphasia and neurosis.

He conducted medical research and studies upon animal magnetism, noctambulation and all waking states, from lucid dreaming to extasis.

Dr. Gh. Marinescu owned over 1000 highly precious publications making a significant contribution to the world medicine in the domain of modern neurology. His main works are: "Studies on the Evolution and Involution of the Nerve Cell" (1900), "The Nerve Cell" (1909), "The Lethargic Encephalitis" (1909), "Conditioned Reflexes" co-authored with A. Kreindler and dedicated to the great physiologist I. P. Pavlov (1936).

"The Nerve Cell" was issued in Paris, in two volumes, and contains the results of the research concerning the morphology, physiology and physiopathology of the nerve cell, together with the synthesis of a vast factual material obtained from other researchers [1].

The wish to realize a monograph on the biology of the nerve cell was manifested during the last years of his life, a monograph that will remain unfinished. Between July 1898 and 1901 the Marinescu made the first science films in the world, in his clinic in Bucharest [2]. *The walking troubles of organic hemiplegy* (1898), *The walking troubles of organic paraplegies* (1899), *A case of hysteric hemiplegy healed through hypnosis* (1899), *The walking troubles of progressive locomotion ataxy* (1900) and *Illnesses of the muscles* (1901). All these short subjects have been preserved. The professor called his works "studies with the help of the cinematograph", and published the results, along with several consecutive frames, in issues of "La Semaine Médicale" magazine from Paris, between 1899 and 1902 [3]. In 1924, Auguste Lumiere recognized the priority of professor Marinescu concerning the first science films: "I've seen your scientific reports about the usage of cinematograph in studies of nervous illnesses, when I was still receiving "La Semaine Médicale", but back then I had other concerns, which left me no spare time to begin biological studies. I must say I forgot those works and I am thankful to you that you reminded them to me. Unfortunately, not many scientists have followed your way." [4]

And in order to complete the image of this great physician, I quote several words from his will: "No flower. No discourse. Those who have loved me should use the money for poor children and the good words to encourage the suffering... leaving for the world nobody ever came back from, I would not want to affect anybody but the truth must yet be told: there is too much injustice in the blessed Romanian Country".

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