

## THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION AND SEVEN EASTERN EUROPEAN INSTITUTES OF FORENSIC MEDICINE FROM 1928

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In 1913, John Davison Rockefeller Sr. (1839–1937) established the Rockefeller Foundation, which ultimately became one of the most famous philanthropic institutions in the world. The Rockefeller Foundation and its International Health Commission (later Board in 1916 and then Division in 1927) ambitiously set out “*to promote the well-being of mankind throughout the world*”. Under the leadership of Wickliffe Rose, the Foundation quickly achieved success in the United States with the hookworm campaign of the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission. Rose was soon looking for a new disease to “attack,” one which met the criteria of being “*of global importance, little was being done about it and it could be prevented at a reasonable cost.*”

During the late – 1920s, the Rockefeller Foundation created the Medical Sciences Division, which emerged from the former Division of Medical Education. The division was led by Dr. Richard M. Pearce until his death in 1930, to which Alan Gregg succeeded him until 1945. During this period, the Division of Medical Sciences was known for making large contributions to research across several fields of medicine. The late 1920s and the 1930s were the most prominent decades in Rockefeller Foundation philanthropy to medical research, as the foundation set a goal to find, train, and encourage scholars for research and practice.

As noted in the 1923 Rockefeller Foundation Annual Report: ... *medical education plays an essential part in the leadership and success of public health work. The Rockefeller Foundation is concerned, therefore, in aiding influential medical schools in many parts of the world to improve their facilities, to strengthen their teaching staffs, to perfect their methods, to maintain high standards, and gradually, in the words of a distinguished British medical authority, to ‘permeate the curriculum with the preventative idea.*

In 1928, the ninth series of **Methods and problems of medical education** by the Rockefeller Foundation published a brief account of legal medicine in Europe and North America, including seven institutes of Legal Medicine from Eastern Europe as well. The institutes included in this anthology were from Hungary (Budapest), from Poland (Warsaw, Krakow, Lvov), from Czechoslovakia (Brno) and from Romania (Bucharest, Cluj).

The medical philosophy of the Rockefeller foundation could be summarized in the foreword written in the first series from 1924 and published by the director of the foundation’ Division of Medical Education, Richard Pearce: “*the period of unprecedented progress and readjustment in medicine, the problem of the dissemination of information is becoming increasingly difficult and perplexing. In the field of research, productive effort is so abundant that it is quite impossible for an investigator to keep in touch with general literature except through abstracts or reviews. Moreover, lengthy papers, and especially those dealing with problems of administration, equipment, methods, and maintenance of laboratories and clinics, are year by year more difficult of publication. This is especially true of contributions in the field of medical education, which, in that they are fundamental to all progress, are in the long run of prime importance. Plans of new buildings, methods of instruction, and experiments in teaching are usually published in local journals or for distribution as commemorative volumes in connection with a dedication or inauguration of new facilities. Such material, naturally, is not widely disseminated. Likewise, the traveler to other countries, interested*

*though he may be in fundamental problems of medical education and returning with first-hand information of new buildings and new methods, can reach only a few associates or perhaps the staff of a single institution. To avoid some of these difficulties, it has seemed advisable to the officers of the Division of Medical Education of the Rockefeller Foundation to collect and publish from time to time brief descriptions of clinics, laboratories, and methods of teaching in different parts of the world in order that the information in convenient form may be brought to the attention of those most interested. It is hoped that the material may be of assistance to those planning improvements in buildings and methods.*

*The collection of articles here presented constitutes the initial effort in this venture. Other collections will appear from time to time. The recipients of these volumes are invited and urged to make suggestions concerning other material which might be published to advantage in the same form, to comment concerning improvements, and also to offer the names of those who might be interested either in these collections as a whole or in the «separates» representing special fields. These articles are not copyrighted and permission to reprint or utilize in other ways is not necessary”.*

The anthology published a brief account of the organization of these Institutes as it was during the period, and described the methods of teaching, research, and the practise of legal medicine in Eastern Europe. They have been cited as countries where the practise of legal medicine has reached a high degree of professionalism. In regard to all these institutes the methods of forensic investigation and the practical application of a science may be termed as the keystone of the whole of the medico-legal edifice. For, according to the opinion of Legrand du Saule, one of the masters of French legal medicine, three important elements are closely united in the practise of medical jurisprudence: science, truth or conscience, and justice. An institute of legal medicine combines all the conditions required to satisfy the needs of justice, of teaching, and of public hygiene.

### THE EASTERN EUROPEAN INSTITUTES

In view of the training required for doctors toward legal medicine, all the Eastern European Institutes have created an organization both for the utilization of teaching material and for wider forensic research.



The Institute of Legal Medicine from Budapest



The Mina Minovici Institute of Legal Medicine from Bucharest



The Institute of Legal Medicine from Cluj

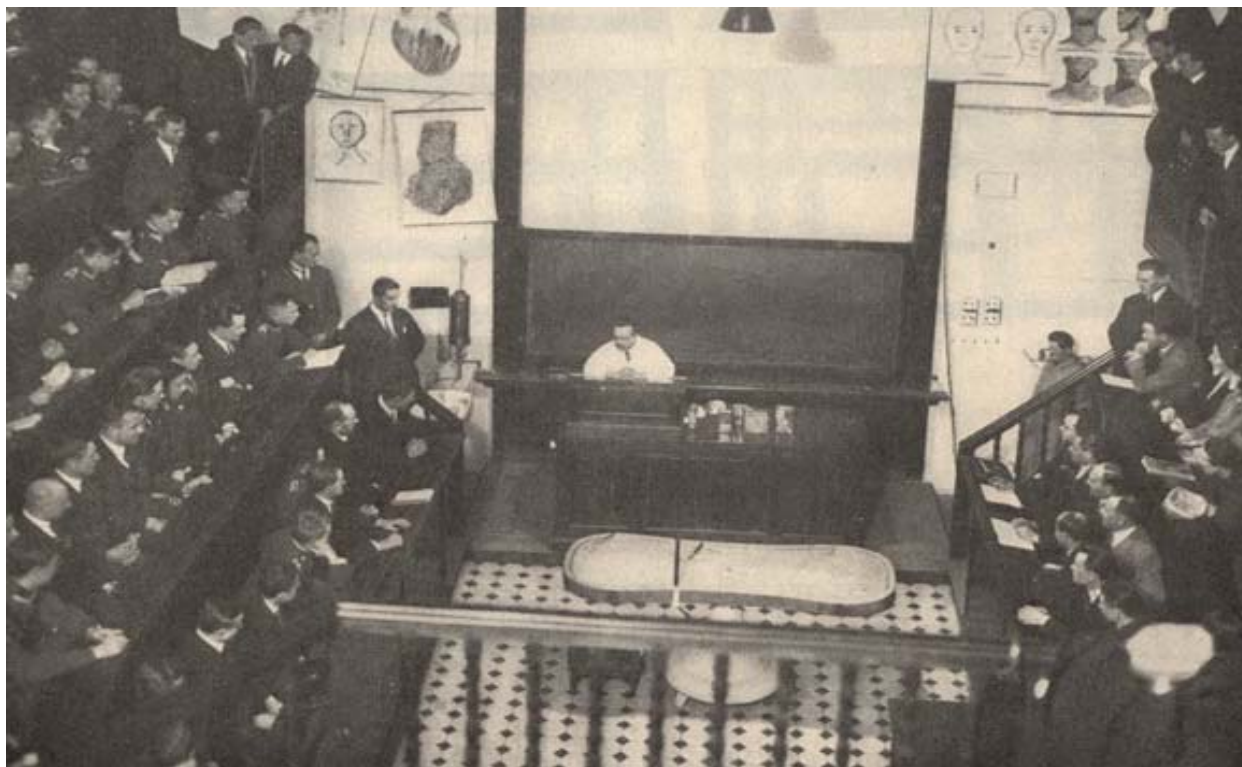


The Institute of Legal Medicine from Krakow



The Institute of Legal Medicine from Lvov

For example the component parts of the Institute of Bucharest included at that time: rooms for the exposition and preservation of cadavers by means of refrigerating apparatus; an autopsy room; photographic rooms: for the cadavers, and for living people where lesions and deformities are photographed; a laboratory of toxicological chemistry where analysis is made of the organs taken from the cadavers of people supposed to have been poisoned; a laboratory for microscopy; radiograph equipment room; equipment for physiological experiments; a laboratory of pathological anatomy; a museum containing anatomical specimens and instruments which have been used in the perpetration of crimes and suicides; a library; an amphitheater for students; and a chapel for bodies before their interment. All the institutes included rooms for teaching purposes, mainly at the Chair of Legal Medicine as a part of the Faculty of Medicine in the East European cities.



The Institute of Legal Medicine from Warsaw (auditorium)

### **FORENSIC ORGANIZATION THROUGH THE PHILOSOPHY OF MODERN FORENSIC MEDICINE**

In establishing the Institute of Legal Medicine in Bucharest in 1892, by professor Mina Minovici (1858–1933), as complex institution, the importance of the practical side of medico-legal inquiry was taken into consideration. It was not only the theoretical teaching, but also the problem of equipping this teaching with an organization that would facilitate its expansion and be in accordance with the needs of social justice. Abandoning the antiquated conception of what is commonly termed a morgue, the Eastern European countries conceived the Institutes of Legal Medicine on one hand as a true mortuary clinic, and on the other as a laboratory for analyzing the forensic problems of the individual and of society. The role of legal medicine being to direct the judge and to enlighten him so that he may know the truth in its penal as well as civil aspects and to direct the legislator in making laws, it is evident that the field of activity of this science is almost unlimited. The same forensic questions, as raised in Eastern Europe and not only, are presented in varied forms: the progress of science in general, changes in customs and in laws, all to introduce new forensic cases into practise.

Making the science of immediate service to society, the Institute of Legal Medicine was no longer destined as a simple mortuary chamber for the exposition of cadavers, but rather, by its close collaboration with the organs of distribution of justice, it has become an indispensable aid to the bar and the tribunals. Because of the medical development which is acquired by clinical teaching, in legal medicine, all the Institutes were included the teaching systems of the Faculties of Medicine in the aforementioned East European cities.

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