

IN MEMORIAM: PROFESSOR HALINA MAZUR (1929-2021)



Prof. dr hab. n. farm. Halina Mazur
(1929-2021)

Professor Halina Mazur, PhD passed away on February 4, 2021. She was a former long-standing Head of the Department of Food and Consumers' Articles Research at the National Institute of Hygiene (PZH) in Warsaw, where she worked for 40 years.

Professor Halina Mazur (née Domagała) was born on February 8, 1929 in Sandomierz into a family of teachers. Both her parents were teachers. In 1947 she passed her matriculation examination and was admitted to the Faculty of Pharmacy at the University of Warsaw (later Medical Academy), which she graduated in 1952.

She started working at the Department Food and Consumers' Articles Research of the National Institute of Hygiene immediately after graduation and worked there until her retirement in 1991. While working at the National Institute of Hygiene she obtained the following scientific degrees: doctor of pharmaceutical sciences on the basis of the thesis entitled *Effects of dioctyltin and dibenzyltin bis-isooctylthioglycolates on rats following per os administration under long-term experimental conditions*, post-doctoral degree on the basis of the habilitation thesis entitled *Health aspects of the use of polyvinyl chloride packaging for foodstuffs with particular reference to organotin stabilisers* and then professor of pharmaceutical sciences.

Professor Halina Mazur, as a scholarship holder of the World Health Organisation, completed two scientific traineeships in the Federal Republic of Germany, where she became acquainted with the analytical methods for determination trace amounts of contaminants in food and the health assessment of plastics intended into contact with food. She used the acquired knowledge in the laboratory she managed.

At that time, methods for testing food contaminants and health evaluation of food packaging were not commonly used in Poland. Her activities in this field brought attention to the so far underestimated problem of health hazards caused by chemical substances migrating from plastics into food.

Professor Halina Mazur carried out a wide range of scientific activities. She had a cooperation with numerous research centres at both home and abroad. Her scientific activities focused on issues concerning the contamination of food and articles of common use, including food packaging, with substances harmful to health, analytical methods used to determine these contaminants, as well as the study of their impact on living organisms. She has also dealt with the analytical and toxicological health assessment of plastics and their suitability for contact with food and man. In this field she has published over 60 individual and collective papers and several chapters in specialist textbooks. One of the most important ones is published in 1972 the textbook: *Hygienic evaluation of plastics in foodstuffs, medicines and objects of use* and used in laboratories involved in the health assessment and testing of articles intended for contact with food. Professor Mazur was also the author of a number of expert opinions for the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Ministry of Health, various Scientific Institutes and other institutions, as well as reviews of scientific projects for the Scientific Research Committee.

She was a leader of numerous scientific works. The scientific team led by Professor Mazur developed several dozen analytical methods published in the *Methodical Manuals of the National Institute of Hygiene*. These methods were then used for many years by the laboratories at sanitary-epidemiological stations in the sanitary supervision over the health quality of food and articles of common use.

Professor Halina Mazur initiated and supervised monitoring studies on the hygienic evaluation of plastic products on the market. These studies resulted in the withdrawal from the market of products contaminated with lead and cadmium and excessive amounts of unbound monomers, unauthorised plasticisers and other substances in quantities harmful to health. Under government programmes, she carried out scientific supervision over food monitoring for chemical contaminants such as nitrates and nitrites, pesticides, antibiotics and heavy metals in daily food rations of selected population groups, as well as microbiological contaminants.

For many years she was the coordinator of scientific cooperation between the National Institute of Hygiene and the Nutrition Institute in Potsdam. This cooperation resulted in an exchange of scientific experience between the staff of both institutes.

Professor Halina Mazur was an outstanding specialist and national expert in food safety and health assessment of packaging materials and articles intended for contact with food and humans. As a national expert, she chaired the Polish delegation for many years at meetings of specialists from other countries, members of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon), regarding the hygienic evaluation of plastic packaging for food and standardisation of its testing methods.

Professor Halina Mazur was a member of Scientific Councils of the National Institute of Hygiene, the Institute of Dairy Industry and the Packaging Research Institute (COBRO) and of committees of Analytical Chemistry, Human Nutrition and Human Ecology at the Polish Academy of Sciences. She was also a member of the Polish Pharmaceutical Society. For many years she was the subject editor for food and common use articles safety quarterly *Roczniki Państwowego Zakładu Higieny*, and later became a member of the International Scientific Committee for this journal. She contributed to the journal until the end of her life.

Besides her scientific work, Professor Halina Mazur participated in the Institute's teaching activities. She conducted lectures, laboratory exercises and seminars on teaching courses regarding the health quality of food and articles of common use, as well as in food hygiene and toxicology; organised for staff from the Provincial Sanitary and Epidemiological Stations. Furthermore, she also took part in the Institute's service activities related to health assessment of packaging materials and products intended for contact with food, as well as issuing official health certificates of the National Institute of Hygiene. This activity, which she began several years after taking up her post, was continued and developed

throughout her employment at the Institute. She also found time for societal activities. She was active in the Trade Union of Health Care Workers and served as a judicial juror at the District Court in Warsaw.

For her professional and societal activities she was repeatedly decorated and honoured, among others with the Silver and Gold Cross of Merit for her activity for the benefit of health protection, with the badge “For exemplary work in the health service”, with the Silver and Gold Union Badge, with an individual award from the Minister of Health and Social Welfare and with a team award received from the Minister of Food Industry and Purchasing.

During 1943-1944, she was active as an underground Home Army (Armia Krajowa) liaison officer under the pseudonyms “Bogda” and “Bogna”. For this underground activity during German occupation she was awarded the Cross of Valour, the Partisan Cross, and the Home Army Cross. She was also a member of the Union of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy, and since 1992 a member of the World Association of Home Army Soldiers, Warsaw District, “Jodła” Milieu.

After retiring, Professor continued to work at the National Institute of Hygiene. She was a member of the Examination Boards for the second degree specialisation in hygiene and the first degree specialisation in hygiene and epidemiology. She had also chaired the Governing Board of the Packaging Certification Centre at the Central Research and Development Centre in Warsaw.

Professor Halina Mazur will be remembered by her colleagues as a noble-hearted person, a warm-hearted colleague and warm in direct contacts. As Head of the Department she was understanding towards her employees, but at the same time demanding and firm. She created an atmosphere of peace, good interpersonal relations, mutual kindness and friendship at her workplace. She was characterised by great sensitivity to human matters. She always gave advice and assistance to those who approached her. In difficult situations, both professional and personal matters, staff could always count on her help and support.

I had the great pleasure and honour of working with Professor Halina Mazur over many years, and she will always remain in my memory as a wise, kind-hearted and wonderful person.

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