

In Memorium

Maria Orwid, 1930-2009

The International Family Therapy Association lost another of its founding members earlier this year and the field lost a dedicated and remarkable therapist, teacher, and administrator as well as a person who was a dear friend to many. A member of the first board of directors of IFTA and a pioneering figure in family therapy and family psychiatry in Poland, Professor Maria Orwid died February 9, 2009, in Krakow. Described by colleagues in the Polish Family Therapy Association as "a Holocaust survivor and guardian of the Holocaust memory, outstanding psychiatry professor at the Jagiellonian University in Krasow," she specialized in child and adolescent psychotherapy and psychiatry. Professor Orwid established the first program of therapy for Holocaust survivors and their offspring, initiating a therapeutic project for Children of the Holocaust in 1997, "helping the group members to regain the sense of being comfortable with themselves." Founder and director of the Children and Adolescents' Psychiatric Clinic at the Jagiellonian's Collegium Medicum, she had retired from that position in 2000.

Maria Orwid was also a founding member of the World Association for Dynamic Psychiatry, a co-founder and honorary president of the Polish-Israeli Mental Health Society, one of the founders of the Psychotherapy and Family Therapy Section of the Polish Psychiatric Society, and an honorary member of the European Family Therapy Association. She was honored multiple times for her professional contributions, including a Medal of Honor awarded by the president of the Federal Republic of Germany for deep involvement in and contributions to the Polish-German dialogue and a gold medal presented by the Deutsche Akademie für Psychoanalyse.

Establishing and maintaining contacts and personal friendships with world leaders in family therapy, including Lyman Wynne, Helm Stierling, Yrjo O. Aalanen, and Momy Elkim, she brought many of them to Poland for lectures and workshops that enriched the learning of younger colleagues. Not the least of her contributions was the organization of the Second IFTA World Family Therapy Congress, held in Krakow in 1990. Among the other many scientific conferences and symposia she organized was the World Dynamic Psychiatric Congress in 2005. Her influence was spread also through teaching, supervising doctoral dissertations, and writing, including publication of more than 160 scientific publications.

Born in Przemysl in 1930 into a Jewish family, the daughter of lawyer Adolf Pfefferow and Clara Pfefferow, she lost most of her family during the Holocaust.