

The contributions of the Romanian physician Dimitrie Gerota to the development of Anatomy

Sociedade Brasileira de Anatomia¹ and Zahoi, D.E.²

¹Sociedade Brasileira de Anatomia

²University of Medicine and Pharmacy “Victor Babes”

România Dimitrie Gerota, Romanian anatomist, surgeon and radiologist, was born in Craiova, on June 17 1867. In 1892 he became an M.D., and in 1893 he obtained a scholarship to study in France and Germany. In his student years, he was a “preparator” (1888-1889) at the Clinic of Descriptive Anatomy and the Surgical Clinic. In 1883-1884 he studied anatomy in Paris with Professors Poirier and Farabeuf and surgery with Professor Guyon. Between 1895 and 1897 he was Professor Waldeyer’s assistant and did research work on lymph vessels and rectal anatomy. In the same period he published his paper on lymph vessel injection (postvital injection of Prussian blue), a technique that was to become famous as the “Gerota technique”. In 1897 he returned to Romania, where he was appointed professor at the Fine Arts School. Constantin Brancusi, the well-known sculptor, was his student. They worked together at the famous Ecorse based on the studies performed in the dissection rooms of the Faculty of Medicine and the Museum of Compared Anatomy. In 1899 he transferred as an assistant at the Institute of Topographic Anatomy and Experimental Surgery, and in 1905 he became a “docent”, a title close to that of a professor. In 1913 he became a full professor at the second Topographic Anatomy Department in Bucharest and remained head of this department until 1937. Gerota also studied the anatomy of the urinary bladder. In 1929 he published a 576-page paper entitled “Appendicitis and the other maladies of the vermiform appendix. An anatomical and clinical study.” He also wrote studies of the autonomic nervous system and he published a monograph about it. Dimitrie Gerota’s best known contributions are those concerning the anatomy of the retroperitoneal space. In 1883, he published a paper on “Supporting structures of the kidney”. Zuckerkandl had described the posterior fascia in 1883. Twelve years later, Gerota documented the presence of the anterior renal fascia, which was to be called Gerota’s fascia. In 1895, he also published an article on the same subject: “Report and Discovery of the Attachment Apparatus of the Kidney”. He described the para-renal adipose body or Gerota’s adipose layer, positioned between the posterior fascia and the posterior abdominal wall. The Albarran-Ormond syndrome, which is the inflammation of the retroperitoneal fibrotic tissue of unknown etiology is also called Gerota’s syndrome or Gerota’s fascitis. Dimitrie Gerota’s prodigious medical activity and especially his most significant contributions in anatomy deserve to gain worldwide recognition and appreciation.