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## О ВРАЧЕБНОЙ ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТИ АНТОНА ПАВЛОВИЧА ЧЕХОВА. К 165-ЛЕТИЮ СО ДНЯ РОЖДЕНИЯ

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## On the Medical Activities of Anton Pavlovich Chekhov. On the 165th Anniversary of His Birth

### Резюме

Антон Павлович Чехов приобрел всемирную славу как писатель, вместе с тем по образованию он был врачом и немалую часть жизни посвятил медицине. В университете его учителями были выдающиеся ученые — терапевт Григорий Антонович Захарьин, хирург Николай Васильевич Склифосовский, гигиенист Федор Федорович Эрисман. К медицинской практике Чехов приступил, будучи студентом 2-го курса, на базе Чикинской земской больницы в подмосковном городе Воскресенске, там же получил место уездного врача после окончания университета. Позднее занимался частной практикой в Москве. По отзывам коллег Антон Павлович Чехов был превосходным диагностом и талантливым психотерапевтом. Отличался исключительной доброжелательностью, терпением и деликатностью по отношению к пациентам. В 1890 г. совершил поездку на Сахалин, где впервые осуществил перепись населения, изучил условия жизни ссыльных, собрал сведения о заболеваниях и причинах смерти. По результатам исследования написал фундаментальный труд «Остров Сахалин». В 1890-е гг. приобрел усадьбу в Мелихово, в 70 км от Москвы, где выполнял обязанности земского врача, боролся с холерой, построил четыре школы, пожарный пункт, почтовую станцию, колокольню и дорогу до станции, организовал общественную библиотеку. В своих литературных произведениях Чехов создал целую галерею реалистичных портретов врачей. Благодаря врачебному опыту и знаниям, он профессионально точно отобразил клинические портреты пациентов с различными заболеваниями, такими как туберкулез, сыпной и брюшной тиф, депрессивное расстройство, мания преследования и др. В 1897 г. у Чехова случилось сильное легочное кровотечение, был диагностирован туберкулез. С 1899 г., по совету врачей, Антон Павлович переехал в Ялту, где по-прежнему помогал всем, кто к нему обращался за врачебной помощью. Организовал строительство туберкулезного санатория и лично внес крупную сумму, делал многочисленные пожертвования больным. В 1904 г. состояние Антона Павловича значительно ухудшилось, ему порекомендовали лечение в Германии, на курорте Баденвейлер, где 2-го июля 1904 г. Чехова не стало.

**Ключевые слова:** врачебная деятельность А.П. Чехова, роль Чехова-врача

### Конфликт интересов

Авторы заявляют, что данная работа, её тема, предмет и содержание не затрагивают конкурирующих интересов

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### Abstract

Anton Pavlovich Chekhov gained worldwide fame as a writer, but he was also a doctor by education and dedicated a significant part of his life to medicine. At the university, he studied under outstanding scientists — therapist Grigory Antonovich Zakharyin, surgeon Nikolai Vasilyevich Sklifosovsky, hygienist Fyodor Fyodorovich Erisman. Chekhov began his medical practice as a second-year student at the Chikinskaya Zemstvo Hospital in the Moscow Region town of Voskresensk, where he secured a position as a district physician after graduating from the university. Later, he practiced privately in Moscow. According to colleagues, Anton Pavlovich Chekhov was an excellent diagnostician and a talented psychotherapist. He was distinguished by exceptional kindness, patience and tact in relation to patients. In 1890, he went to Sakhalin, where he was the first to conduct a population census, studied the living conditions of exiles, collected data on diseases and causes of death. Based on the results of his research, he wrote a fundamental work, Sakhalin Island. In the 1890s, he acquired an estate in Melikhovo, 70 km from Moscow, where he served as a zemstvo doctor, fought cholera, built four schools, a fire station, a post office, a bell tower and a road to the railway station, and organized a public library. In his literary works, Chekhov created a vast gallery of realistic portrayals of doctors. Thanks to his medical experience and knowledge, he professionally accurately depicted clinical portraits of patients with such various diseases as tuberculosis, typhus and typhoid fever, depressive disorder, persecution mania, etc. In 1897,

Chekhov suffered from severe pulmonary hemorrhage and was diagnosed with tuberculosis. From 1899, following medical advice, Anton Pavlovich moved to Yalta, where he continued to help everyone who turned to him for medical help. He initiated the construction of a tuberculosis sanatorium and personally contributed a large sum, made numerous charitable donations to the sick. In 1904, Anton Pavlovich's condition worsened significantly, he was recommended treatment in Germany, at the Badenweiler resort, where Chekhov died on July 2, 1904.

**Key words:** medical activity of A.P. Chekhov, the role of Chekhov the doctor

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*No doubt, medical sciences have greatly impacted my literary work; they have widened by observations, enriched me with knowledge, the real value of which for me as a writer can be perceived only by a doctor...*

*Aphides eat grass, rust corrodes iron, and false pretences kill the soul.*

A. P. Chekhov

## Taganrog — Moscow (1860–1884)

Anton Pavlovich Chekhov is known all over the world as a great writer, but he dedicated a large part of his life to medicine. Chekhov was born in 1860 in Taganrog, in the family of a second-guild merchant. It is worth mentioning that both grandfathers of Anton Pavlovich (both paternal and maternal) were peasant serfs, who bought themselves and their families out, which was quite rare in the serf Russia<sup>1</sup>. Chekhov's father, Pavel Egorovich, was not a very successful businessman, but he played violin and sang; his mother, Evgenia Yakovlevna, cared for her husband and children and was very tender-hearted. Besides Anton, the family had four sons and a daughter. All children were well-educated and belonged to the intellectual society. Anton was a writer and doctor; Aleksander<sup>2</sup> and Mikhail — writers, Nikolay — artist, Ivan — teacher. Maria, the daughter, was a teacher in a gymnasium and did painting. Chekhov said that they had inherited their talents from their father, while the soul — from their mother.

Chekhov fell for literature when he was a young man and studied at the gymnasium; however, after graduation, he chose medicine. This is what his parents wanted: they hoped that this way their son would have a decent salary. The thing is that in 1876 Chekhov's father went into bankruptcy and fled with his family from the debtor's prison<sup>3</sup> to Moscow, where his eldest sons had already moved to: Aleksander was studying at the university and Nikolay was attending the art school. Only 16-year-old Anton remained in Taganrog; he was finishing his studies at the gymnasium, earning his living by tutoring, selling remaining property and sending money to Moscow, where the family were very poor for the first several years. Chekhov

always made sure that his family is financially secure, he especially tried to make his mother's life easier; however, he earned money not as a doctor, but as a writer [1–3].

In 1879, Chekhov was a year 1 student of the Medical Department at the Imperial Moscow University (now I. M. Sechenov First Moscow State Medical University). Chekhov liked Moscow, the life was bubbling there.



**Figure 1.** A.P. Chekhov among his family and friends (1890)

<sup>1</sup> The 1803 Free Grain Farmer Ordinance stated that a peasant serf could become free by paying a buyout. Over the period from 1803 to 1861, 1.5 % of serfs (approx. 150,000) got free.

<sup>2</sup> Aleksander's son, Mikhail Chekhov, is an outstanding actor and theatre teacher.

<sup>3</sup> Debtor's prisons were abandoned in the Russian Empire in 1895.

The second half of the XIX century was the period of significant progressive transformations undertaken by Aleksander II. Liberation of the serfs, Zemstvo Reform, granting independence to universities, relaxation of censorship and other reforms were a stimulus for the scientific and cultural explosion. Russian scientists made fundamental discoveries: Dmitry Mendeleev — periodic law, Ilya Mechnikov — phagocytosis, Ivan Sechenov and Ivan Pavlov — laws of the brain function. A constellation of Russian writers — Lev Tolstoy, Nikolay Leskov, Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Vladimir Korolenko and others — are known all over the world.

The Moscow Medical School was flourishing. At the university, Chekhov was taught by the outstanding scientists — internist Grigory Antonovich Zakharin, surgeon Nikolay Vasilyevich Sklifosovsky, hygienist Fyodor Fyodorovich Erisman.

The most recognised for Chekhov was Zakharin. He mentioned that his favourite writer was Tolstoy, while Zakharin was his favourite medical professional. Zakharin was considered to be the most outstanding Russian clinician of that time and an unbeaten diagnostician. He was the father of a therapeutic school, where the diagnosis was based on a thorough interview with the patient, unlike objectivists, who relied mostly on laboratory and instrumental test results. In treatment activities, Zakharin advocated an individual approach and emphasised, in addition to medications, the role of the doctor's personality for the patient. Even one hundred and fifty years later, these approaches in the medicine are fundamental, despite the development of hi-tech.

Chekhov followed Zakharin's principles and paid special attention to the patient's mental state. As remembered by his fellow men, Chekhov dreamt of teaching medical psychology to students. His was ahead of his epoch, because this discipline was included into curricula at higher medical educational institutions only in the second half of XX century.

Chekhov was a year 1 student, when his humorous story — A Letter to the Scientist Neighbour — was published for the first time. Some say that the story was written under the impression from the lectures on the Darwin's Theory of Evolution. After his successful debut, Chekhov was invited by other publishing houses. Journals paid five kopecks for one line, and Chekhov's remuneration was a source of income for the whole family. The family could not count on the eldest brothers, who led Bohemian life. Chekhov believed that literature was his temporary job and used pen names under his works.

His medical practice began when Chekhov was a year 2 student. A younger brother of Anton Pavlovich, Ivan, was hired as a teacher and received a big flat in Voskresensk (now Istra) 30 km from Moscow, and the family used to spend their summer there. There Chekhov met an outstanding therapist Pavel Arsenievich Arkhangelskiy, Chief Physician at Chikinskaya district hospital, and started helping during patient visits during summer. In 1884, when Chekhov graduated from the university, he started working there as a district doctor. Arkhangelskiy spoke of the young doctor in very warm

terms, "He was very attentive, and it was obvious that he loved his job, he loved his patients. He always attentively listened to the patient; he never raised his voice despite tiredness, even if the patient talked about something unrelated to the illness..." [1, 2].

## Doctor and writer (1885–1890)

Once certified as a doctor, Chekhov lost himself in his work; he had 30–40 patients every day, attended patients at home, participated in post-mortem examinations and court hearings; during holiday, he worked as the Chief Physician in Zvenigorod hospital. It is worth noting that district doctors earned far less than the staff at central clinics; in addition, Chekhov treated half of his patients free of charge.

Chekhov was thinking about a doctorate thesis work, and during one year he collected extensive information on the history of medicine in Russia. In his work, Chekhov presented medical evidence, that False Dmitry, who claimed to be a son of Ivan the Terrible, was a fake. The point is that Dmitry, the son of Ivan the Terrible, who died at the age of nine years old, had epilepsy, which does not disappear with the age, and False Dmitry did not suffer from epilepsy.

Chekhov intended to devote himself entirely to medicine and quit scribbles, as he called literature. But in 1886 he received a letter from Dmitry Grigorovich, a well-known writer of that time, who admired Chekhov's talent and persuaded him to use his real name under his works.

Motivated by a high opinion of the patriarch of literature, who predicted the worldwide fame to Dostoevsky, Chekhov continued his writing and returned to Moscow. The thesis was not finished, but the collected materials are a valuable source of information on the history of medicine.

In Moscow, Chekhov was a private doctor, he had a sign "Doctor Chekhov" on his door; and he spent his nights at a table. Chekhov jokingly mentioned that medicine was his wife and literature was his lover; when he's fed up with one of them, he went to the other, but he needed them both. "I treat, and I write", he said to himself. In summer, he worked at Chikinskaya hospital or substituted the Chief Physician in Zvenigorod. He wrote, "I had several hundred patients during the summer, but earned only one ruble" [1, 2].

Colleagues called Chekhov an outstanding diagnostician. His fellow men told lots of stories about Chekhov's diagnostic talent and his clear-sightedness. Chekhov was the first to diagnose an aortic aneurysm in Isaac Levitan, the disease which later killed the painter. He persuaded Vladimir Korolenko that his illness was not dangerous, and he would recover, and this is what happened. When 73-year-old Lev Tolstoy got ill, it was Chekhov who predicted favourable outcome, while other doctors did not believe in it. Konstantin Stanislavsky recollected that he had a visitor when Chekhov was at his house. The writer observed that man, and when he left, Chekhov asked questions about him. Stanislavsky asked about the reason for Chekhov being interested, and Chekhov answered that the man was a suicide. Indeed, several years later, he poisoned himself. It is interesting to note that when Chekhov met Sergey Rakhmaninov for the first time, he said that



he'd become famous. When Rakhmaninov asked how he knew, Chekhov answered that it's written all over his face.

A talented psychotherapist, he cured patients, whom other doctors could not help. Levitan, who was on the verge of suicide because of severe depression, thought that Chekhov was the only one who could save him, and he saved him. Maria Pavlovna, the writer's sister, recollected that Chekhov's patients told that they felt better even if they just sat by Anton Pavlovich. Apparently, his personal charm had a role to play: his smiling eyes, social ease, empathy, tact.

However, he also had tragical accidents, typical of the work as a doctor. Chekhov was right to write that only doctors had horrible days and hours. In 1887, he was called by his fellow painter, the mother and three sisters of whom had typhoid.

At that time, infectious diseases, including typhoid, were the main cause of death. In 1884, the causative agent of typhoid was identified; it caused severe fever with stupor, hence the name of the disease — typhoid ("typhos" in Greek, meaning fog). In the absence of antibiotics, which would appear only half a century later, a half of all typhoid patients died. Chekhov did all he could, but the painter's mother, and then one sister, died; and Chekhov witnessed the death of the sister. Deeply shaken by what had happened, Chekhov removed the "Doctor Chekhov" sign from his door...

By the end of 1880s, Chekhov was the well-known writer; in 1888, he was awarded the most prestigious literature award in Russia — Pushkin Award by the Academy of Science. The next year was tragic for Chekhov: his elder brother Nikolay died of tuberculosis.

Tuberculosis was one of the most common diseases in the XIX century; in urban areas, one in ten people died. In 1882, when Chekhov was a year 3 student, Robert Koch isolated a tuberculosis pathogen; however, the first TB drug, streptomycin, appeared only in 1943. In 1890, Koch proposed to treat TB patients with tuberculin<sup>4</sup>, a mix of live and killed tubercular bacteria. It soon appeared that the drug was a cause of death. Chekhov was one of the first to report the danger of using tuberculin. Key therapeutic approaches in TB patients were high calorie diet, good rest and southern sun.

The death of 30-year-old Nikolay Chekhov came like a thunderbolt for his family. Anton Pavlovich also had several episodes of blood spitting, a typical symptom of tuberculosis, but he covered it up, did not get tested and treated; probably he realised that the condition was untreatable. When his brother died, Chekhov all of a sudden decided to move to Sakhalin, the place where convicts were expelled to. Throughout Siberia, at the world's end, a cold and restless island of convicts.

## Sakhalin (1890–1891)

Chekhov set himself a task to see and describe the life of convicts on Sakhalin, whose fate did not bother anyone. No one had volunteered to go there to do research. Anton

Pavlovich was again thinking about writing a scientific paper and was thoroughly preparing for it: he studied all available sources.

On Sakhalin, the Russian flag was hoisted in 1853, and several years later, after unsuccessful attempts to relocate free serfs here, the island become the place for convicts.<sup>5</sup> It is worth noting that starting from the mid-XVIII century and up to the early XX century, death sentence was quite rare in Russia; a punishment for criminal offences was banishment to Siberia; and the more grave the crime, the farther east the offender was relocated. Sakhalin was the farthest location.

Chekhov started his journey to Sakhalin in April 1890, alone, on his own money. He travelled 11,000 versts in 2.5 months, almost half of this journey was on horses, in giggling wagons. Drunk wagoners, sometimes lack of any food at guesthouses, except vodka, oceans of mud instead of roads, making the wagon trip on several occasions, and he had to spend the rest of his journey in wet clothes. The spring in that area was the coldest in 40 years.

On Sakhalin, Chekhov spent three months and three days. He was the first to count the population: 10 thousand people; he travelled around all convict settlements and completed each card by himself. He collected information about diseases and causes of death. When studying the healthcare system condition, he found out that there were no medications at all; doctors examined convicts mostly to determine how many lashes they can stand, while the medical assistant enjoyed when convicts were punished. As ever, Chekhov was interested in the mental state of the population, who were forced to relocate there. He concluded that despair and inhuman conditions made them inhumane; they became insensitive to other people's grief and pain, both of convicts and their guards.

The report of his journey is *Sakhalin Island*, a book, written by Chekhov during five years. This is a fundamental description of the history of the island, living conditions of convicts and their health, containing extensive actual and statistical data. After the book was finished, Chekhov said that medicine could not accuse him of betrayal, he contributed as much as he could. However, the Head of the Moscow University refused to accept the book as a thesis paper [4].

This story is not new. For example, such outstanding scientists as Nikolay Lobachevsky and Dmitry Mendeleev, were not accepted to the Russian Academy of Science. It can be assumed that the decision was influenced by the burning social relevance of the book, while after the assassination of Aleksander II in 1881, the country was hit by counter-reforms: universities were restricted in their freedoms, censorship became stricter again, etc.

The situation was aggravated by an official refutation announced by Sakhalin officials, who emphasised that the critical essays about Sakhalin written by Chekhov had nothing to do with the reality [5].

Nevertheless, Sakhalin Island made the society and government think about the life of convicts and take

<sup>4</sup> Later, tuberculin was isolated from boiled *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* and used for diagnostic purposes only.

<sup>5</sup> The decision to ban convict camps on Sakhalin was passed by the State Council in 1906.



**Figure 2.** A.P. Chekhov at his desk (1891)

partial measures to implement improvements proposed by Chekhov. Corporal punishment for women was banned; orphan homes got more money for running costs; medications were provided; and life-long relegation and convict service were banned. Chekhov sent two thousand children books to Sakhalin to establish a library. Together with Princess E. Naryshkina, who was in charge of patronage of convicts, he opened an orphanage for 120 minor criminals on Sakhalin.

In 1891, the Black Earth region and Middle Volga were starving because of bad harvest, and Anton Pavlovich started an active campaign to help the starving people; for the collection 'Relief Aid', he prepared a chapter from his future book about Sakhalin. Being impressed by severe Sakhalin conditions, for two years he could write only about Sakhalin; "saturated with Sakhalin", as he used to say. The trip to Sakhalin damaged the health of Anton Pavlovich: now he had arrhythmia.

After Sakhalin, the meaning of life became the centrepiece of his work. In his diary, he made a record: "To save his life, a Moslem digs a well. It would be great if every one of us left a school, a well or anything like this after them, so that the life goes on and does not pass without a trace" [2]. Apparently, purchase of a mansion near Moscow is associated with the implementation of this idea.

### **Melikhovo (1892–1898)**

In 1892, Chekhov bought an abandoned mansion in Melikhovo, near Serpukhov, 70 km away from Moscow, he brought his parents and his sister there and got very active.

Anton Pavlovich started his acquaintance with Melikhovo serfs by asking them not to call him Master, because he was a doctor and would treat them. In a separate wing, they organised a medical station, and a flag was hoisted, so that villagers could see when doctor Chekhov was there. On such days, there was a queue of wagons and people, both adults and children. The only assistant to Chekhov

was his sister Maria: she recorded patients, dispensed medications, applied bandages and other simple manipulations. All medical assistance, including medications, was free. Very soon, Chekhov gained the trust and love of the locals. Villagers used to say, "Our doctor is even better than in Moscow..." [2].

Anton Pavlovich advocated the interests of villagers in the country council, and it is only due to his involvement that the construction of the tanning enterprise on river Luytorka, where the locals were getting their water from, was banned. The abandoned mansion in Melikhovo soon became a garden; Chekhov planted one thousand of fruit trees, apple and cherry trees.

In summer 1892, the southern regions of Russia were battling an outbreak of cholera, and Chekhov felt compelled to step in as a district doctor in Melikhovo, refusing to be paid for it.

It is worth explaining that, similar to plague and Siberian plague, cholera is an extremely dangerous infection. The previous cholera epidemics in Russia in the 1850s killed over one million people. In 1883, the cholera bacterium was discovered, and it was established that the cause of infection was an ill person; the disease spreads with infected water and food. The high mortality rates of cholera were due to diarrhoea and severe dehydration: vomiting and diarrhoea caused the daily loss of up to 20 litres of fluid, so that the death could occur within days. Antibiotics and infusion therapy were essential, but in the XIX century both were absent; in other words, there was hardly any therapy, the most common treatment techniques of that time — blood-letting and emetics — made the patients' condition even worse.

Fighting epidemics was primarily the task of district doctors, whose job was tough; one doctor had up to 20–30 thousand people to attend to, who lived within 20 km.

The jurisdiction of district doctor Chekhov included 25 villages, four schools, and one monastery. Chekhov notified his publisher that he would be writing again only when there is no more threat of cholera epidemics, although it meant empty pockets for him. He procured disinfectants from manufacturers, went around the villages in his jurisdiction and controlled the sanitary condition there; he arranged for construction of barracks for ill people, visited patients, sometimes 4–5 times a day; in one year, he attended to approximately one thousand patients.

If in 1848 cholera epidemics in Serpukhov district killed over 4,000 people, this time there were only 14 cases of the disease, including 4 deaths. There were no cholera patients in the area serviced by Chekhov. In 1894, when the risk of epidemics passed, Chekhov retired as a district doctor and started writing again, but he still treated everyone who came to him for help: he always kept his stethoscope and tendon hammer on his table [1, 5–7].

His extensive medical experience and knowledge helped Chekhov professionally depict the clinical presentation of a disease in his works. For instance, *The Black Monk*, *Gusev*, and *Late-Blooming Flowers* describe tuberculosis. His story *Typhus* details the clinical manifestation of spotted fever, *The Bishop* — of typhoid fever, *A Doctor's*



Figure 3. A.P. Chekhov (1893)

Visit — of depressive disorder, and Ward No. 6 — of persecution complex. Chekhov's works are full of description of doctors and other medical staff and give a true idea of conditions in medical institutions.

Besides writing, Anton Pavlovich focused on social work. He was an active member of the anti-alcoholism committee in Russia, which was formed under the auspices of the Public Health Protection Association. In 1895, he was elected a district councillor and focused on the organisation of medial help and public education. The same year, Chekhov was approached by his colleagues, who mentioned lack of funds to publish *The Annals of Surgery*. At that time, Chekhov was building a school in Melikhovo and was unable to provide funds, but he did his best to save the medical journal, and he succeeded.

During his life in the rural area, Anton Pavlovich used his own money to build four schools, fire depot, post office, bell tower, and a road to the Lopasnya station (it was named the Chekhov station in 1965). He established a public library in Melikhovo. The same year, he sent two thousand books to his home city, Taganrog. Chekhov dreamt of building a hospital in Melikhovo, but he did not have time.

In 1897, during a meeting with his publisher, Chekhov had a severe pulmonary bleeding, which could not be stopped until morning, and he was admitted to the hospital. To stop the bleeding, ice was applied to his chest and was taken orally; the patient was recommended to rest as much as possible. To improve the blood values, high calorie diet and subcutaneous arsenic were used. Chest pain was treated with applications, rubs, iodine tincture, oral codeine, and morphine [1, 2, 8, 9].

After the therapy, Chekhov's condition improved significantly, and two weeks later he insisted on being discharged. One year later, in 1899, he followed the doctor's recommendations and relocated to Yalta.

## 'Exile' to Yalta (1899–1904)

Once in Yalta, Chekhov dived into the social life. He was elected a member of the board of trustees of Yalta gymnasium, a member of Yalta Red Cross Committee; he participated in the organisation of jubilee Pushkin festivities; organised collection of funds for starving children in the Samara Province.

In summer 1901, Anton Pavlovich was treated with kumiss in Bashkiria, near Ufa, at Andreevsky resort, which was one of the best resorts in the Ufa Province. The same year, he got married to an actress Olga Leonidovna Knipper; after the church wedding, they moved to Bashkiria. Kumiss-cure resort was 40 houses in a birch grove. Fresh air, wild strawberry openings, June warmth, the picturesque view of steppes, fishing on Dema, where occasionally trout could be fished out, attention and care of Doctor Varavka, calorie-rich food, and four kumiss bottles daily. There, Anton Pavlovich gained over five kilograms, for the first time in many years; however, he has never become a fan of kumiss. One month later, despite persuasion by the doctor, Chekhov started his journey to Yalta.

In remembrance of the writer, in 1904, Chekhov's Garden House was installed on Chekhov's Hill, a place across the resort, where Anton Pavlovich enjoyed watching the surrounding landscape for hours. In the 1920s, Andreevsky resort was renamed A. P. Chekhov Resort, and the house, where Anton Pavlovich lived, became a museum.

In Yalta, Chekhov created his famous plays. However, he did not quit medicine. He still helped everyone, who came to him for medical assistance. The local doctors invited Chekhov to take part in discussion of complicated cases. While living in Yalta, Chekhov wrote an appeal to help poor TB patients, which was published in numerous newspapers and journals, and a lot of donations were received. He organised construction of Yauzlar resort in Yalta (now it is A. P. Chekhov resort) for TB patients and contributed five thousand roubles. Chekhov was always asked for help, advice or money, and tried not to refuse. He arranged for placement of patients to clinics, paid for their treatment, donated money for patients.

In his letter to his editor and friend Aleksey Suvorin, Anton Pavlovich wrote, "The universe is fine. The only bad thing is us. We lack justice..." [11]. All his life, Chekhov was an advocate of justice. In 1902, his protest to the so-called academician incident had a public response. The point is that in 1902 Maksim Gorky was elected an honorary academician in literature<sup>6</sup>, but the Academy of Science cancelled its decision as directed by the higher-level authorities. As a response to it, Chekhov, who was an honorary academician from 1900, quit his title.

<sup>6</sup> The title "Honorary Academician in Belles-lettres of the Russian Language and Literature of the Imperial Academy of Science" appeared in 1899; in 1900, Chekhov, Lev Tolstoy, Vladimir Korolenko and others were named honorary academicians.



In January 1902, the VIII Pirogov Conference of Doctors organised by Pirogov Society, the most established medical association in Russia, was held in Moscow. Anton Pavlovich was going to take part in the conference, but due to his poor health he could not leave Yalta [12, 13].

Despite the southern sun and sea being beneficial for his health, in Yalta Chekhov was separated from his usual company and creative atmosphere, from active social life; he missed bubbling Moscow, his house near Moscow, where he often hosted friends and acquaintances. In summer, Yalta was full of summer residents, and in winter it looked deserted; also, his wife was not beside him, she preferred theatres; the cold house was not suitable for life in winter. Chekhov called Yalta exile. His condition deteriorated. As a conclusion to his death wish addressed to his sister, Anton Pavlovich wrote, "Help those who are poor. Take care of our mother. Live in peace" [1, p. 741].

## Badenweiler resort — Moscow (June–July 1904)

In spring 1904, Chekhov's condition deteriorated; he suffered from shortness of breath and cough, he had to take narcotics to kill pain. Somebody recommended bringing Chekhov to Badenweiler resort in Germany, and his wife followed the recommendation. A German doctor examined Chekhov upon arrival to Badenweiler and left speechless. He could not understand how the patient managed to travel in such poor condition; especially that Chekhov was a doctor and realised the situation. Chekhov understood the situation perfectly; before his departure, he said to one of his acquaintances, "This is where I will die" [1, p. 810]. Probably, he wanted to spare his grieving family and give them hope. One month later, on the 2 July 1904, Chekhov died... The coffin with the writer's body was transferred to Moscow, and on the 9 July he was buried in the Novo-Devitchi Convent cemetery (now it is the Novo-Dyevitchiye cemetery).


One day, talking to Ivan Bunin, Anton Pavlovich mentioned that he would be remembered, and his works would be read somewhere seven years after his death. As a matter of fact, Chekhov remains one of the most popular writers world-wide, even one hundred and fifty years later. As for his contribution to medicine, Chekhov was a wonderful doctor and managed to do a lot despite his short life. He helped a lot of people, selflessly battled cholera, travelled to Sakhalin and created a scientific work about the life on the island, engaged in charity and executive activities, created a portrait gallery of doctors and clinical portraits of patients. Chekhov's works are considered one of the most useful sources of psychotherapy, and the role of doctor Chekhov is immeasurable.

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