The Romanian physiologist Daniel Danielopolu was born in Bucharest, Romania, on April 12, 1884. In 1900, he began the study of both law and medicine. He studied law because his father was a professor of law at the university, and he studied medicine because of his own interests. In 1903, while still a student, he was awarded a residency at the Civil Hospitals Administration.

In 1905, Danielopolu published his first article, “Blennorrhagic Strictures of the Membraneous Urethra,” in Annales Genitourinaries, in Paris, France. In 1907, he became assistant professor in the Brancoveanu Hospital in Bucharest, where he worked in the laboratory of Romanian microbiologist Ion Cantacuzino (1863-1934). In 1909, Danielopolu was awarded the MD degree. In his thesis, “Contributions to the Study of Raw Tuberculin,” he proposed that a positive skin test for tuberculosis (PPD) in patients with leprosy was not a false-positive result but rather due to the fact that many patients with leprosy were also infected with Mycobacterium (tuberculosis). This thesis earned Danielopolu the Gold Medal of the Medical Faculty of the University of Bucharest.

Combining his work in the laboratory with his clinical practice, Danielopolu made several important contributions, including drug therapy for heart failure. He also introduced the use of electrocardiography to Romania. In 1919, he became associate professor of medicine at the Filantropia Hospital in Bucharest, where he provided leadership in the research program. In 1920, he was named full professor, and his inaugural lecture was “The Work of Claude Bernard Applied to Pathology.”

In 1921, Danielopolu gave up his medical practice and dedicated himself to basic research, which focused on the autonomic nervous system. In 1928, he proposed that the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, besides being antagonistic, are also interrelated, a process that he termed interstimulant antagonism. This theory became widely accepted. Some of his other work was concerned with carotid sinus reflexes.

Danielopolu developed the viscerographic method to study the effect of the autonomic nervous system on the viscera. This method and its results were published in 1930 in Die Viszerographische Methode. Danielopolu also authored many other books and articles.

Danielopolu became interested in politics, and in 1944 he initiated a memorandum that was endorsed by more than 60 scientists urging Romania to seek peace. During this period, he continued to provide leadership at the Filantropia Hospital, where he developed a laboratory for the study of nuclear medicine.

On April 30, 1955, at the age of 71 years, Daniel Danielopolu died in Romania of cholangiocarcinoma. After his death, the institute where he had worked was renamed the Daniel Danielopolu Institute for Normal and Pathological Physiology (the institute has since closed). Danielopolu was the founder of the Medical Academy of Romania and also served as its secretary. He was recognized worldwide by being elected a member of the medical academies of Paris, Madrid, and Buenos Aires. In 1984, Daniel Danielopolu was honored on a stamp (Scott No. 3240) issued by Romania on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of his birth.

Professor Vlaicu Sandor and Dr Puin Stoiculescu provided data for this vignette.

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