

Eglė SAKALAUŠKAITĖ-JUODEIKIENĖ

**Dr. Jonas Basanavičius (1851–1927)
and His Nervous Disease**

Doctor Jonas Basanavičius (1851—1927) was a Lithuanian physician, major political figure, a scholar. During his lifetime, Basanavičius suffered from numerous symptoms related to the nervous system.

The aim of this study was to review the descriptions of Basanavičius' neurological symptoms, his interpretation of these symptoms, and to reveal the treatment methods in the light of the clinical knowledge and practice of the time. We analyzed Basanavičius' autobiography „The Chronicle of My Life and the History of a Nervous Disease“ (1851—1922) and the historical records of his contemporaries. Medical terms, diagnoses and treatment methods were analyzed in the context of the historical period and compared to how the terms are used today.

In his autobiography, Basanavičius reflected on his life events and realities of the time in Lithuania and Europe. He also meticulously depicted and analyzed the symptoms of his nervous system disease. Basanavičius suffered from various episodic ailments — headache, insomnia, deafness, olfactory and gustatory impairments, cardiac arrhythmias, leg pain, paraesthesias, and urinary disorders, most of which he generally attributed to neurasthenia, a “novel” disease of that time. Basanavičius's complaints and symptoms, depicted in chronological order, show how the disease developed and was affected by his personal life and historical context events.

Basanavičius' autobiography can be regarded as a case study of a variety of symptoms, identified as neurasthenia by the doctor himself. Clinical viewpoint and details render it a rich source of the medical knowledge and practices of the time.

Vilnius University
egle.sakalauskaite@yahoo.com