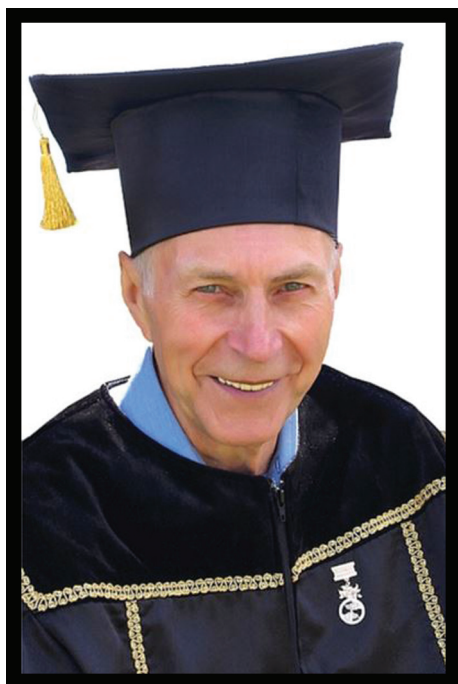


Professor Ulrich Eduard Vladimirovich (1937 – 2025)



An outstanding pediatric surgeon, one of the founders of the Russian surgical vertebrology, founder of the St. Petersburg School of Pediatric Vertebrologists, Honorary professor of the Ilizarov Center, doctor of medical sciences, professor Eduard Vladimirovich Ulrich passed away on June 2, 2025. He was only 87 years old. "Only", because his clear and sharp mind, strong handshake, brilliant erudition, unbending will, colossal performance, selfless devotion to his favorite work and intuition in determining advanced trends in spinal surgery did not depend on age.

The beginning of Eduard Vladimirovich's professional way was a series of tests. His childhood coincided with the siege of Leningrad and evacuation; his father was repressed during Stalin's rule and was rehabilitated only in 2011. By the way, Eduard Vladimirovich spent 12 years fighting for this rehabilitation. The choice of profession was predetermined by the war years and observation of evacuation hospitals, but even after successfully passing the entrance exams, the commission had questions for the son of a repressed person with a German surname.

After graduating from Leningrad Pediatric Medical Institute (LPMI) in 1961, he worked for two years as a surgeon in the district hospital of the Arkhangelsk region together with experienced operating nurses who had gone through the Great Patriotic War, and in practice he knew "the difference between Esmarch's mug and Esmarch's mask." Later, he recalled this time as a period of professional happiness. Returning to Leningrad in 1963, Eduard Vladimirovich connected his whole life with the Department of Pediatric Surgery of LPMI, going from a postgraduate student and assistant to the head of the department.

In 1967, Eduard Vladimirovich Ulrich defended his candidate's of medical sciences dissertation on the topic of "Surgical treatment of post-traumatic deformities of the bones of the upper extremities in children under the supervision of G.A. Bairov, a famous pediatric surgeon, corresponding member of the Academy of Medical Sciences." At a time when pediatric surgery required universal approach, he dealt with emergency and planned thoracic and abdominal surgery, issues of pediatric anesthesiology and proctology. In the 1970s, Eduard Vladimirovich began to study the topic that was completely unknown at that time, congenital deformities of the spine, and in 1985 he successfully defended his doctoral dissertation on the topic of "Surgical treatment of malformations of the spine in children."

There was no computerization yet, but he systematized data on more than 500 patients and created a classification of congenital anomalies of the spine and spinal canal. At a time when special spinal instruments were unavailable in our country, Eduard Vladimirovich created the first original metal instrumentation for the correction of spinal deformities in young children using his own drawings, developed unique operations for hemivertebrae, vertebral segmentation disorders, thoracic insufficiency syndromes and spinal cord splitting, focusing on finding methods for correcting such defects. During the same period, research was initiated on combined extravertebral pathology, methods of contrasting the spinal canal and anesthetic protection of the spinal cord. It were the years when CT and MRI had just started to be introduced into medical practice, and most surgical decisions were made based on only X-ray spondylography.

Professor E.V. Ulrich was ahead of his time, having organized the first training course in pediatric vertebrology in Russia in the mid-1990s (the creation of this specialty was only just discussed) and having put forward the idea of creating a specialized emergency vertebrology service

in St. Petersburg. He did not find support in the city administration at that time, but almost 10 years later this idea was finally implemented by the director of the Turner Children's Orthopedic Institute A.G. Baindurashvili within the framework of the regional center for spinal injuries in children.

The merits of Professor E.V. Ulrich have been recognized by leading world specialists. In 1999, E.V. Ulrich together with Professor J. Dubousset (France), with whom they had been friends for many years, organized the GICD (Cotrel-Dubousset Group) congress in St. Petersburg, which was attended by more than 100 vertebrologists from Europe, Asia and Africa. In the early 2000s, under his leadership, a comprehensive program was prepared that united researchers, doctors and teachers of medical universities and actually determined the creation of the school of pediatric vertebrologists in St. Petersburg, from which many specialists emerged and now head the leading medical centers, institutes and clinics of our country.

Eduard Vladimirovich's active life position was reflected in the advancement of knowledge and in the education of young people. In 2004, he became the first laureate of the Ternovsky Award for Services to Children's Surgery. At the same time, he joined the staff of the newly created scientific and practical journal "Spine Surgery" and published in its very first issue an article devoted to the classification of vertebral anomalies together with R. Winter and J. Lonstein. E.V. Ulrich was a member of the editorial boards of several surgical and orthopedic journals, the author of seven monographs, numerous patents, and the supervisor and scientific consultant of three doctoral and 19 candidate dissertations.

He gradually limited his practical work with age but Eduard Vladimirovich remained a person to whom everyone, regardless of age and experience, could turn for help. Anyone who was lucky enough to communicate with him remembers the sincere joy that Professor Ulrich experienced when talking about the ideas and successes of colleagues and students. His presence in the operating room, calm voice and practical advice made them work more confidently and set seemingly unattainable goals, and successfully solve the most unusual situations.

Eduard Vladimirovich Ulrich passed away at the age of 87, but he remains in our memory as a wise Teacher, Colleague, Scientist and a Man with a capital letter. Thank you, Eduard Vladimirovich, for the fact that all those years we had the happiness of being with you ...

*Students and colleagues of Professor E.V. Ulrich,
editorial board of the journal Genij Orthopedii*