

# Advertisements in Professional Lithuanian Pharmaceutical Journals, 1923–1940

Angelė Rudzianskaitė  
Vilma Gudienė

Lithuanian University of Health Sciences,  
Lithuanian Museum of the History of Medicine and Pharmacy  
Kaunas LT-44275, Lithuania  
e-mail: angelrud@gmail.com  
e-mail: vilma.gudiene@med.kmu.lt

**Abstract:** Lithuanian pharmacists during the interwar period published two journals to meet their professional needs – *Farmacijos žinios* (Pharmacy News) and *Lietuvos farmaceutas* (Lithuanian Pharmacist). These journals also published advertisements for pharmaceuticals, pharmaceutical manufacturers, medical items, and various other goods. This paper will analyze which products did Lithuanian and foreign companies advertise in the Lithuanian pharmaceutical journals and discuss the contents of these advertisements.

During their early years, the pharmaceutical journals contained mostly advertisements for patented medicines, submitted by individual pharmacies. The Palanga's pharmacy, for example, submitted the majority of such advertisements, including those for 'Trejos Devynierios' (Three nines), 'Essentia Cordialis' (essential cordial), and veterinary medications.

Gradually, independent drug and chemical manufacturers emerged and started the mass production of drugs and chemicals. Individual pharmacies could not compete with them. This resulted in a decrease in the amount of advertisements from individual pharmacies and an increase in the amount of advertisements from the newly-established pharmaceutical companies and their distributors. The majority of the advertisements were submitted by such Lithuanian pharmaceutical companies as GerMaPo and Sanitas (the former being more active in their advertising campaign).

Advertisements from distributors were abundant as well. They sold products of such well-known European producers as Knoll,

*Merck, C.F. Boehringer & Soehne, Sandoz, F. Hoffman-La Roch, J. D. Riedel, and E. Schering.*

*Later on, foreign producers began to run their own advertising campaigns. German companies were the most active ones. Bayer and C.F. Boehringer & Soehne took the lead, while Merck, Knoll, and Hoechst were somewhat less active.*

*The earliest advertisements resembled informational announcements. The advertisers would simply list their products without any praising comments, or simply state that “Sandėlyje yra visuomet viskas kas aptiekoms reikalinga” (“In our warehouse we have everything that pharmacies might need”). Only in the fourth decade, major foreign and Lithuanian producers started to use visual advertisement, logos, and suggestive texts. Advertisements of the Bayer company were the most creative in this respect.*

**Keywords:** *advertisements by medical and pharmaceutical companies, history of pharmacies*

## Introduction

During the interwar period Lithuanian pharmacists published two journals to meet their professional needs – *Farmacijos žinios* (Pharmacy News) and *Lietuvos farmaceutas* (Lithuanian Pharmacist). The magazine *Farmacijos žinios* (1923–1940) was the main specialized pharmaceutical magazine in Lithuania which reflected pharmaceutical problems of that time and was concerned with ways of solving them, and the activity of organizations. The Union of Lithuanian Pharmacists (established in 1921) and the Society of Lithuanian Pharmacists (established in 1922) were the publishers of this journal. The first society consolidated the workers, while the second one the owners of pharmacies, and only they could become real members of the organization. The Society of Lithuanian Pharmacists united about 80% pharmacy owners all over the country (Savickas, Gudiene & Stankūnienė, 2003). The main readers of the journal were owners and managers of pharmacies – the basic drug trade marketing partners. This journal also included advertisements for pharmaceutical manufacturers, medical items and various other goods.

The second magazine, *Lietuvos farmaceutas*, was published by pharmacy workers. However it was being published for only one year in 1933. Drug

manufacturers and drug wholesalers put only a few advertisements in this magazine, because it had only a small audience of ordinary consumers. The magazine advertised stationery, flowers, and even – coffins.

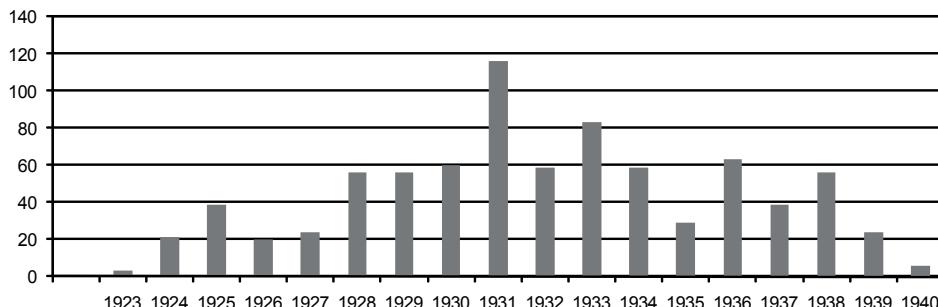
The journal *Farmacijos žinios* was significantly more important for providers of advertisements, because the magazine was popular, and its readers were more influential in Lithuanian apothecary business than the readers of the magazine *Lietuvos farmaceutas*. A page of advertising in *Lietuvos farmaceutas* cost 75 Lt, and in *Farmacijos žinios* – 50 Lt.

## Quantitative dynamics of advertisements

Comparing the advertising tradition in Lithuania in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the American and West European advertising in the same period, we can state that advertising in Lithuania was still under development. It was very reserved, and the specialists' attitudes towards drug advertising were critical. For example, during the 1924 Lithuanian Doctors Congress doctor V. Bagdonas said: "Advertisement in matters of health is impermissible, harmful manifestation; therefore it should be eliminated and is considered an offense against Medical Ethics. [...] It is like this in America: medical and pharmaceutical advertising has reached the most impudently shameless degree there [...]" (Bagdonas, 1926). However, Bagdonas' ideas and the opponents of advertisements did not receive any response from the publishers of the journal.

We have carefully reviewed, analyzed, evaluated and summarized the pages of all advertisements found in the journal *Farmacijos žinios* (available at <http://www.epaveldas.lt>). The advertisements of individual pharmacies were placed on the third or fourth pages of the journal, while major enterprises and drug wholesalers were given even the first or second pages in each issue of the journal. The biggest number of advertisements were published during the years of recession from 1929 to 1933 (Chart 1). Drug sales were lower (Statistical Survey of Public Health, 1934) but the scope of pharmaceutical advertising in press was larger. In 1925–1940, Lithuanian drug manufacturers and pharmacists were very active in creating patent drugs. Besides, imported drugs were competing with the local ones.

Chart 1. The number of pages allocated to advertisements (x) in *Farmacijos žinios* per year (y)



There were two declines in advertising. In 1926, the publishing of the journal was close to bankruptcy. In 1939 and 1940 the country and business lived in fear of war. Even ceasing the publishing of the journal was considered. It was difficult to prepare interesting articles, and the number of advertisements decreased. Usually we could see an obvious correlation between the popularity of a publication and the number of advertisements included. In some issues, advertising took up as much as 30% of publication space. It is interesting to note that the second issue of *Farmacijos žinios* of 1938 was meant to commemorate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independent Lithuania. The journal came out in larger than the usual size, but contained no advertisements.

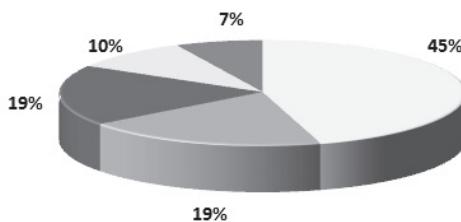
About 70% of advertisements in the journal *Farmacijos žinios* were designed to advertise drugs. The publishers did not hesitate to urge pharmacists, readers of the publication: “Dear pharmacists! Buy only from these institutions and supply the buyers only with these products that are advertised in our journal!” (*‘Farmacijos žinios’*, 1932, p. 34).

## Advertising suppliers

Pharmaceutical companies and pharmacies often combined several activities: for example, pharmacies did not only sell drugs to the people but also manufactured patented drugs and distributed them to other pharmacies. Drug wholesalers established manufacturing laboratories and drug manufacturers set up drug wholesalers. The Lithuanian companies GerMaPo and Pharmakon distributed not only their production, but also products by foreign companies. Therefore, when dividing advertisement suppliers into categories, their basic activities were taken as the defining criteria.

We tried to find out what enterprises, organizations, and individuals had advertised themselves in the journal, and what kind of drugs, tools and equipment did they advertise. Considering these criteria, the advertising suppliers were divided into five groups (Chart 2):

*Chart 2. Amount of advertising space taken up by various groups  
Farmacijos žinios 1923–1940*



*Lithuanian drug manufacturers and wholesalers – 45%;  
Lithuanian pharmacies – 19%;  
Foreign drug manufacturers – 7%;  
Lithuanian pharmacy equipment manufacturers – 19%;  
Other – 10%.*

## I

The first drug manufacturing companies were established in 1921–1922 (Vaistija and Chemical & Pharmaceutical Laboratory ‘Sanitas’ in Kaunas, Galen in Šiauliai) but in 1937 there were already eight registered chemical and pharmaceutical laboratories in Lithuania: Pharmakon, Vaistas, GerMaPo, Central Public Drug Wholesaler (Žukienė, 2005). They pursued mostly moderate advertising campaigns. The first Lithuanian drug advertisements appeared in 1923 and were supplied by the joint stock company Vaistija (‘Vaistija’, 1923, p. 2). What were the enterprises proud of? Both Vaistija and Sanitas emphasized in their advertisements that namely their company was the first drug manufacturing enterprise in Lithuania (‘Vaistija’, 1927, p. 32). Most advertisements, visually probably the most interesting ones, were by Sanitas. Today it is a successfully operating drug manufacturing plant. In 1926, Sanitas published only a very modest ornamented advertisement (‘Sanitas’, 1926, p. 34). Later the enterprise created its trademark which was featured together with the advertising text. It is possible that the enterprise borrowed the idea for the trademark design – a cross designed from the company’s name – from the Bayer company (‘Sanitas’, 1934, p. 41). Yet there is no information about whether intellectual property rights were violated in this case or it was caused by other reasons. The company Sanitas paid more and more attention to making its activities



Figure 1. Advertisement of the chemical, pharmaceutical and cosmetic manufacturer 'Sanitas' (Kaunas, Lithuania), 1931.

known, and in 1931 used very modern advertising for that time – depicting a huge company building, smoke tumbling from chimneys, with drug bottles and boxes laid out in the background ('Sanitas', 1931, p. 28; Fig. 1).

The Lithuanian company GerMaPo which carried out wholesale and drug manufacturing was established by three manufacturers, A. Gerdvilis, V. Malela and V. Podleckis, who used for the company name the first syllables of their surnames (Kaikaris, 2000). GerMaPo advertisements were not distinguished by drawings or fanciful slogans; they merely informed about new products, sometimes presenting their prices, too ('GerMaPo', 1937, p. 32).

The company Pharmakon in Klaipėda pursued analogous activities. It bought the largest number (83) of advertising pages in this journal. The Pharmakon factory, having strong historical links with Germany, was developing the field of wholesale and supplied Lithuanian pharmacists with drugs from Germany, England, and Denmark.

## II

The second group of advertising providers were pharmacies. They made up 19% of all published advertisements. Lithuanian pharmaceutical industry was born only at the beginning of the third decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. During the first years

of independence (from 1918) pharmacies were the main drug producers. They not only made any drug as per doctors' prescriptions, but developed their patent medicine. Pharmacy laboratories made patent medicine intended for a significant segment of the pharmaceutical market, but they were poorly advertised.

The Palanga pharmacy pursued the most active and consistent advertising campaign in press. The advertising of this pharmacy made up more than half (54%) of the advertisements in this group. It is a marvel that this historical pharmacy, founded in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, is still in operation. In interwar years, patented medicines were manufactured there, the best-known of which, and one still being produced, is the bitter herb mixture Trejos devynerios ('Three nines' made of 27 different herbs; Fig. 2). The Palanga's pharmacy provided drugs for heart diseases, *essencia cardiales*, as well as medicine for cows, pigs, horses, as there were no separate veterinary pharmacies in the interwar period (Palanga pharmacy, 1930, p. 40).

The pharmacist Kazys Mažonas from a small town Skuodas advertised his injection drugs (Fig. 3). He manufactured injection solutions with narcotic substances (morphine, cocaine, etc.) and arsenic saline solutions in his laboratory and advertised in the professional publication for physicians in the

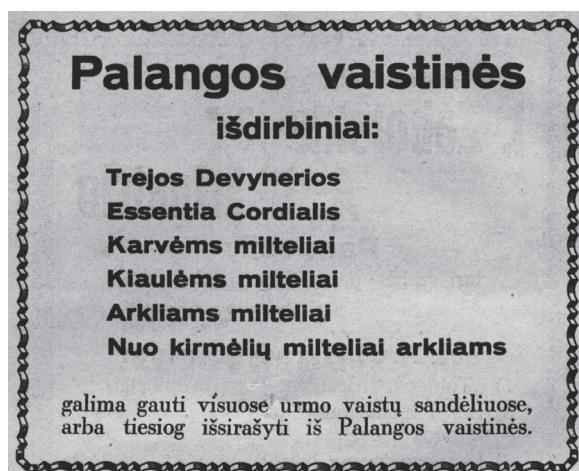


Figure 2. Advertisement of the Palanga pharmacy (Palanga, Lithuania), 1930.



Figure 3. Advertisement for injection drugs by pharmacist Kazys Mažonas (Skuodas, Lithuania), 1921.

journal *Medicina* (Mažonas, 1921, p. 161). Later on, big drug manufacturing companies pushed the small pharmacies out from the market.

### III

The third group of advertising providers includes foreign drug producers and their representatives in Lithuania. They made up only 7% of all advertisements. Only those advertisements that promoted foreign pharmaceutical manufacturers and their products were assigned to this group.

From 1924 onwards, representatives of foreign drug producers in Lithuania advertised in *Farmacijos žinios* drugs mostly by the famous Merck, Knoll, Bayer, F. Hoffman-La Roch, C. F. Boehringer & Soehne G., Ciba, Schering, Riedel, Hoechst, etc.

The famous German drug manufacturers C. F. Boehringer & Soehne were represented by Fr. Süssmann (Süssmann, 1926, p. 1). The pharmacist V. Cirkvicas represented the E. Merck company and provided information about its drugs and reagents (Cirkvicas, 1936, p. 33). The pharmacist J. Luncas was also a representative of Merck and Knoll companies in Lithuania (Luncas, 1924, p. 16). A qualified pharmacist Leopoldas Malcas declared that he even represented five foreign drug manufacturing companies (Malcas, 1926, p. 33).

A little while later, foreign companies began their own advertising campaigns in the journal. Undoubtedly, the Bayer company took the leader position: their first advertisement in the journal was issued in 1936. The advertisements of the company were characterized by originality and large variety. During three years (1936–1939) ten different Bayer advertisements appeared in the journal. They depicted buildings of the pharmaceutical factory, the equipment, test-tubes used for researches, and a drug maker dressed in a white smock (Bayer, 1937, p. 1; Fig. 4); the advantages of the plant are noted in the text: “State-of-the-art methods of thorough cleanliness and constant scientific observation guarantee the standardized quality of pharmaceutical chemicals” (Bayer, 1938c, p. 1).

The advertisements emphasize that while prescribing medicine it is necessary to heed that these were the drugs of Bayer that has been operating for 50 years (Bayer, 1938a, p. 1). Some advertisements depict the same company by demonstrating its power; some others even a drug maker at work in a research laboratory. We can see a historical motif, the process of drug manufacture from picking herbs, crushing, boiling to modern factory technologies and chemical drugs (Bayer, 1938b, p. 1).

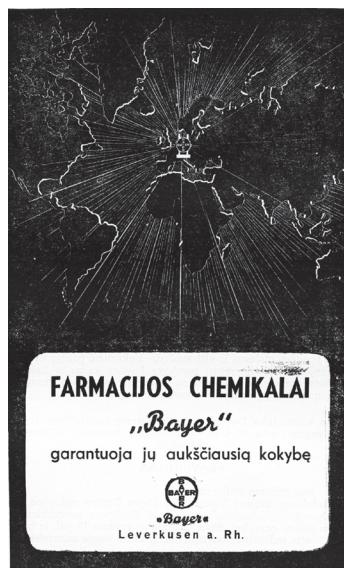


Figure 5. Advertisement of the pharmaceutical and chemical manufacturer Bayer (Leverkusen, Germany), 1939.

Figure 4. Advertisement for Bayer Company products, 1937.

The last Bayer advertisement notes that the drugs of their company are spread worldwide: the well-known Bayer trademark is represented by rays connecting every continent in the world (Bayer, 1939, p. 1; Fig 5).

Exceptional is an advertisement of Novarsenobenzol Billon, made in France, proclaiming a cure for syphilis (Specia, 1933, p. 73) and the advertisement of Insulin 'Tetewop' by the joint stock company Theodor Teichgraeber (Insulin, 1924, p. 1; 1925, p. 1).

#### IV

As the journal *Farmacijos žinios* was targeted at pharmacy owners and managers, it also advertised pharmacy equipment, vessels, bandage, packing implement, and rubber ware. Advertisements of this group made up about 19% of all the

advertisements published in the journal. The company A. Mogilevskis and J. Finas (in Kaunas) was the most consistent advertising provider (A. Mogilevskis and Finas, 1923, p. 18). Its advertisements, taking up half the page, can be found in every issue of the journal (1924–1940). A. Mogilevskis and J. Finas bought the Chemical and Pharmaceutical Laboratory ‘Sanitas’ in 1924 (Žukienė, 2005). Other active advertisement suppliers were M. Rosenzveigas wholesaler (M. Rozencveigas, 1924, p. 16), the cardboard factory Bekara-Kartonož, and the joint stock company Eskulap, a laboratory equipment and cosmetics supplier.

## V

The advertisement providers that could not be ascribed to any of the above-mentioned groups make up group number five. These are importers and sellers of soap and cosmetics, societies, printing houses, lottery organizers, co-tutors, and individuals.

## Conclusions

In the 1930s, the tradition of medical and pharmaceutical advertising in Lithuania was still under development but the rapid growth of advertising was stimulated by Lithuanian and foreign drug producers and the publishers of pharmaceutical journals. During the interwar period Lithuanian pharmacists published two journals dedicated to their profession – *Farmacijos žinios* (Pharmacy News, 1923–1940) and *Lietuvos farmaceutas* (Lithuanian Pharmacist, 1933).

The publishers of *Farmacijos žinios* focused their attention exclusively on advertising pharmaceutical news, because publishing advertisements was the main source of their income and helped them to keep the journal’s popularity for 18 years. The publishers of the journal received 30% to 41.5% of money from advertisement providers and 15% from their subscribers.

The publishers of the advertisements in the journal *Lietuvos farmaceutas* focused on products for personal needs. Drug manufacturers and drug wholesalers put only a few advertisements in this magazine, because their circle of readers was too small.

The commercial advertising of drugs made up the biggest share of advertisements published in *Farmacijos žinios*. As a rule, the advertisements were put on the extra hard pages at the beginning or the end of a journal copy. The pages were not colored, but were brownish, greenish, grayish – very different from the usual yellow journal pages.

In the first year the publishers confined themselves to very moderate information, only marking the advertised commodity: “rubber articles”, “carbonic acid cylinders”, “hygiene articles”. The production was praised in a few words: “long-lasting”, “standardized quality”. Later attempts were made to catch a potential client’s attention and focus it on the quality of production and service. It was emphasized that orders would be fulfilled fast and honestly, at optimal prices, and the client would be able to settle an account for the drugs later. All this was put in such phrases: “Fast and orderly fulfillment of orders”, “Our basic attitude is to provide the first-rate commodity”.

At the same time Lithuanian advertisers played on the ethnic sentiment and recommended the products of one’s own country (*Farmacijos žinios*, 1933, p. 72).

When reviewing the advertising of this period, it seems that advertisers and publishers did not aspire to include as much information as possible in the advertisements: only rare advertisements featured phrases praising the company, and most of them would only tell the names of drugs, traded by the particular company. Today, the advertising of that period is an interesting source of information, supplying us with information about drug manufacturers, business conditions, etc.

## References

‘A. Mogilevskis and Finas’ (1923), ‘A. Mogiliauskas ir Finas,’ [advertisement] in *Farmacijos žinios*, 1923, no. 1, p. 18.

**Bagdonas, V.** (1926), ‘Apie farmacijos reikalų tvarkymą Lietuvoje’ [Solution to the problems in the pharmaceutical sector] *Trečiasis Lietuvos gydytojų suvažiavimas (spalio mėn. 2-4 d. 1924 m.)*, The 3rd Lithuanian Physicians’ Meeting (2–4 October, 1924), Kaunas, pp. 43–44.

‘Bayer’ (1937), ‘Farmacijos chemikalai “Bayer”,’ [advertisement] in *Farmacijos žinios*, 1937, no. 10, p. 1.

——— (1938a), ‘Farmacijos chemikalai “Bayer”,’ [advertisement] in *Farmacijos žinios*, 1938, no. 10, p. 1.

——— (1938b), ‘Įmonės kruopščiausios švaros,’ [advertisement] in *Farmacijos žinios*, 1938, no. 5, p. 1.

——— (1938c), ‘Įmonės kruopščiausios švaros,’ [advertisement] in *Farmacijos žinios*, 1938, no. 12, p. 1.

——— (1939), ‘Farmacijos chemikalai “Bayer”,’ [advertisement] in *Farmacijos žinios*, 1939, no. 4/5, p. 1.

**Cirkvicas, V.** (1936), [advertisement] in *Farmacijos žinios*, 1936, no. 6, p. 33.

‘Farmacijos žinios’ (1932), ‘Gerbiamieji Vaistininkai’ [advertisement] in *Farmacijos žinios* 1932, no. 5, p. 35.

*Farmacijos žinios* (1933), [advertisement] 1933, no. 10/11, p. 72.

‘GerMaPo’ (1937), ‘Akc. ‘GerMaPo’ B-vės’ [advertisement] in *Farmacijos žinios*, 1937, no. 1, p. 32.

*Lithuanian National Library website* (n.d.), Retrieved from <http://lnb.lt/e-paveldas> [accessed April 2011].

**Kaikaris, A.** (2000), *Lietuvos farmacijos istorija. Atsiminimai* [History of Pharmacies in Lithuania. A Memoir] Kaunas: Sveikatingumo ir medicinos reklamos centras.

**Luncas, J.** (1924), ‘E. Merc’o ir Knoll’io atstovybė,’ [advertisement] in *Farmacijos žinios*, 1924, no. 2, p. 16.

**Malcas, L.** (1926), ‘Atstovybės,’ [advertisement] in *Farmacijos žinios*, 1926, no. 5, p. 33.

**Mažonas, K.** (1921), ‘Prov. K. Mažono vaistinėj Skuode,’ *Medicina* [Medicine], 1921.

‘M. Rozencveigas’ (1924), ‘M. Rozencveigas,’ [advertisement] in *Farmacijos žinios*, 1924, no. 3, p. 16.

Palanga pharmacy (1930), ‘Palangos vaistinės išdirbiniai.’ [advertisement] in *Farmacijos žinios*, 1930, no. 2, p. 40.

‘Sanitas’ (1926), [advertisement] in *Farmacijos žinios*, 1926, no. 2, p. 34.

——— (1931), [advertisement] in *Farmacijos žinios*, 1931, no. 1, p. 28.

——— (1934), [advertisement] in *Farmacijos žinios*, 1934, no. 6, p. 41.

**Savickas, A.; Gudienė, V. & Stankūnienė, A.** (2003), ‘Lietuvos vaistininkų draugijos veiklos kryptys 1922–1940 metais.’ [Outline of the major activities of the Lithuanian Society of Pharmacists during 1922–1940] *Medicina*, vol. 39, no. 2, pp. 165–173.

Specia (1933), ‘Leistas įvežti ir pardavinėti Lietuvoje.’ [advertisement] in *Farmacijos žinios*, 1933, no. 10/11, p. 73.

Statistical Survey of Public Health (1934), *Lietuvos viešosios sveikatos 1932 ir 1933 metų apžvalga* [Statistical Survey of Public Health in Lithuania in 1932 and 1933] Kaunas: Spindulio spaustuvė, pp. 64–67.

Süssmann, Fr. (1926), ‘Specialiniai Boehringerio preparatai,’ [advertisement] in *Farmacijos žinios*, 1926, no. 2, p. 1.

‘Theodor Teichgraeber’ (1924), ‘Insulin “Tetewop”,’ [advertisement] in *Farmacijos žinios*, 1924, no. 6, p. 1.

——— (1925), ‘Insulin “Tetewop”,’ [advertisement] in *Farmacijos žinios*, 1925, no. 1, p. 1.

‘Vaistija’ (1923), [advertisement] in *Farmacijos žinios*, 1923, no. 1, p. 2.

——— (1927), [advertisement] in *Farmacijos žinios*, 1927, no. 2, p. 32.

**Žukienė, R.** (2005), ‘Lietuvos farmacija XX amžiuje.’ [Lithuanian pharmacy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century], *Lietuvos farmacija*, Vilnius: Lietuvos farmacijos sąjunga, vol. 3, pp. 179–180.