

Summary

Although the beginnings of hospital health care in Pula date from the 12th century, with the Templar hospice for the poor, the elderly and the frail, the origins of the present regional hospital in Pula are to be found in the year 1896 when the first modern hospital was built on St. Michael's hill. The hospice was transferred inside the city walls in the 14th century, where it remained until the year 1842. A Military Hospital in Vodnjan existed under Napoleon (1805-1813). A new modern hospital was built in Pula in 1861 for the needs of the army and the navy. This building is today still in use, since some of the wards of the Pula hospital are situated there. The beginnings of Croatian public health in Pula and in Istria must be searched for in the year 1947. Almost the complete hospital staff left the hospital after World War II, and a similar occurrence was registered in all the other health care institutions in Istria. The first teams of doctors and nurses from the new state were sent to Istria in 1947 in order to help to reorganize a new health care service in the rough conditions after the war. In the period 1961-1994 the hospital operated together with the Community Health Centre Pula under the name Pula Medical Centre. The Pula hospital, today the regional hospital of the Istrian County as well, has 19 medical wards and three administrative – technical departments. It employs 1270 staff, and has 506 beds for patients according to the contract with the Croatian Administration for Health Insurance (HZZO). The hospital's wards are: Anesthesia and reanimation, Cytology, Dermatovenerology, Physical therapy, Gynecology with obstetrics, Infectology, Internal medicine, Laboratory, Pharmacy, Surgical ward, Neurology, Nuclear medicine, Pathology with forensic medicine, Ophthalmology, Otolaryngology, Pediatrics, Psychiatry, Radiology and Transfusion medicine. Parts of the hospital were transferred to the former Military hospital in 2000. The hospital now operates on two locations, which represents a major communication and financial problem. The scientific unit was established in 1985 and numerous scientific projects were accepted. The publication "Zbornik zdravstva u Istri" (Anthology of Health Care in Istria) was issued every five years in the period 1967 – 1992, when the sixth book was published. This publication has become a significant written material for the study of the past and the development of the Pula hospital and the Istrian health care system. The manual "Tourist medicine", one of the first books of this type in the world, aroused great interest throughout the country. The professional-scientific publication Glasnik pulske bolnice (Pula Hospital Herald) has been published since 2004. Many doctors, nurses and other hospital staff participated in the Croatian War of Independence, almost in every battle field, and more than one hundred employees were awarded the Independence War Testimonial and other decorations. Hundreds of wounded were healed back then from all parts of Croatia. In the fall of 1996 the reconstruction of the abandoned former military hospital began, so that some wards of the hospital could be situated there. That was done as a temporary solution until an additional hospital building is built next to the present Maternity ward. The official resettling and the opening of the new hospital location (Navy Hospital) took place on August 30, 2000. The hospital today employs 193 doctors, 136 specialists, 43 residents, 4 assistant physicians and 10 interns. 18 specialists have master's degrees and three of them doctor degrees. The hospital also employs 430 nurses, and 217 laboratory technicians, medical radiologists, physical therapists and biochemists. 29 doctors are currently attending postgraduate studies at the Universities of Rijeka and Zagreb. A sub-specialization has been granted to 37 specialists in the last two years. Administrative staff makes 8% of the employees of the „Pula general hospital“, the central and the largest health care institution in Istria. Over 160.000 inhabitants of Istria gravitate toward the hospital. Approximately 19 500 modern surgeries are performed in the hospital annually, some 25.00 patients are hospitalized from the whole Istrian County, from other parts of Croatia, as well as numerous tourists that make half the population of the region in the summer months. Over 450.000 patients use the polyclinic services annually. The most complex and the most up to date diagnostic and therapeutic procedures are performed in the hospital using the most modern medical technology. The hospital was the second health care institution in Croatia to set up an ethical board and one of the first with a committee for the determination of brain death. The organisation Donor Network of Croatia originated in the Pula Hospital in 1998. Prim. Mitar and dr. Žgrablić, from the Pula hospital, became through this organization the first European transplantation coordinators in Croatia. Prominent physicians from the Pula hospital translated and published the book *ABC of brainstem death* by the British authors Hurley and Pallis. This book represents today a reference textbook for the study and the understanding of brain death. Year by year this hospital's work is becoming more significant within the Croatian health care system. The number of surgeries grew from 7656 to 19590 in the period 1993-2007. The number of patients examined in the hospital's polyclinics increased from 378 689 (1997) to the present 470 000 annually. This hospital is certain to have a successful future and an equal stand with similar institutions in the European Union.