



## Prof. dr. sc. Branimir Jernej (1951–2010)

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Branimir Jernej passed away on May 29, 2010 in a motorcycle accident at the age of 59. The Ruđer Bošković Institute lost an outstanding scientist and the School of Medicine a respected teacher. He was a real gentleman and, above all, a good man.

Dear Branko,

I am writing to you this letter, although I no longer write letters, nobody does any more.

The last one I wrote was during my Military Service. I don't remember whom to, probably to my mother. I do not know how to communicate with you, but I am still trying to, every single day. I hope to succeed by writing this letter.

The last time we saw each other was around 4 o'clock on the day you left on holiday, Friday, May, 28 2010, as usual, before the weekend. We were in my room, leaning on the window overlooking Ruđer's Park, attempting to sum up the events of the previous week and discussing the future and what we should do. As usual we were confronted with many changes – us old crusaders, tired of change. In fact we were tired of the fighting for changes, which long ago should have been a basic part of civilized life and not subject of a fight, even in science. Too tired of opening doors which had been opened so many times before. Even in Ruđer. We were too old for illusions and false promises and too young to accept the existing situation. I was particularly pleased to see you ride off on your motorcycle and rid yourself of everyday work related problems. At least for a short time to forget work and those of us remaining. The rain had stopped, roads were dry and everything appeared idyllic. I encouraged your idea to abandon yourself to the pleasure you felt in riding along deserted roads, riding your motorcycle for the sake of riding and not thinking about anything in particular. This was the way you gathered your strength to develop new scientific projects. Like so many times before, you listened to me.

It has been six months since you passed away and yet, nothing has changed. We are all right, particularly today, on a beautiful sunny, summer Thursday. I imagine us still together, Lipa, you and me by the automatic coffee vending machine. Our little tradition; one macchiato, one cappuccino with and one without sugar. We were laughing at something, I can't remember what, because I find it difficult to remember amusing things now. People passing by, stop for a moment and exchange a few words or two. Suddenly Bubi comes running up and you throw a stick for him. You're both so happy. You even came to see me yesterday, unexpectedly, in a dream. It was Friday again. You wanted us to meet, as usual, before the weekend. You came to my room and we were leaning on the window, overlooking Ruđer's Park, attempting to sum up the previous week and discussing future events. Only this time,

you brought good news to this old crusader. That all those battles that we had fought had not been in vain, even those that we had lost, and that peace had finally arrived and that we had won. And that the time for battle was now in the hands of the young. It was time for some new youngsters. What about us? We can withdraw a little and concentrate on work, on family and friends, in the peace for which we had fought. I was not to worry. Before you left you asked me about Maja. I hear from her and see her quite often, and you can as usual be proud of her. At that moment I wake up. The dream had gone away. You were not here, although the peace that you had brought with you in my dream remained, and still does today.

A sunny Thursday, and Bubi comes running up with his tail in the air and your stick in his mouth. Now Lipa and I throw your stick and avoid trying to explain anything to him. We no longer order cappuccino with sugar, and no longer argue about who paid the last time. People come up to us and talk a little. Some no longer mention you, some no longer think about you and only a few still expect you to appear in front of the coffee vending machine, or at the doors of the laboratory. That's life I suppose. It appears to be true that time helps us forget events, particularly unhappy ones. Nevertheless, you will never be parted from us, your friends, who can never erase your number from our mobile phones. You will always be here, and we will write a letter to you every day.

It's hard for me now to achieve the piece of mind I encouraged you to find on that Friday afternoon, the 28<sup>th</sup> May 2010. I know you would have forgiven me for everything just as I would you. That's why we were such good friends for so long.

*Darko*

Branimir Jernej was born in 1951 in Zagreb, where he attended classical primary school, Grammar School for Mathematics and the School of Medicine. He graduated in 1978, and in 1987 defended his doctoral thesis at the School of Medicine, University of Zagreb. From 1979 he was employed in the Ruđer Bošković Institute, where he was elected Senior Scientist in 2001 (re-elected in 2006). In 2009 he was elected regular professor for the course on Neuroscience at the School of Medicine University of Zagreb.

At the beginning of the 1990s he founded the Laboratory for Neurochemistry and Molecular Neurobiology in the Institute of Molecular Biology at the Ruđer Bošković Institute, since when he was the Head. His field of scientific interest was connected with the research of brain transmitters of serotonin. Experimentally the research resulted in the development of an original animal model with constitutionally changed homeostasis of serotonin, which was called the »Wister-Zagreb 5HT rat«. The model was recently presented as an original contribution in the field of neuroscience in a book on serotonin transmitters, published by the Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom. His clinical research, neurochemical and molecular-genetic, were primarily connected with the role of serotonin in neuropsychiatric diseases.

He was Head of several scientific projects of the Ministry of Science, Republic of Croatia, and numerous inter-

national projects in cooperation with Germany, Austria, Slovenia, Spain and Italy.

He published seventy scientific articles, the majority of which were in international journals cited in *Current Contents*, among which were journals such as *Molecular Psychiatry*, *American Journal of Psychiatry*, *Biological Psychiatry*. Some of the leading journals in the field of neuroscience. His studies have been cited approximately 700 times.

He held a whole series of well known lectures in different world scientific institutions, among which were the following: Centro de Investigacion y Desarrollo (Barcelona, Spain), Rheinische Friedrich, Wilhelms-Universität (Bonn, Germany), Institute F. Magendie (Bordeaux, France) Trinity College (Dublin, Ireland), Harvard Medical School (Boston, USA).

He took part in undergraduate teaching of neuroscience at the School of Medicine, and was head of several courses for postgraduate and doctoral studies at the Medical, Natural Science and Pharmaceutical Schools of the University of Zagreb, and University Study of Language Communication. He taught a number of young scientists through mentorship and preparation of ten master and doctoral papers.

He was reviewer for 10 eminent scientific journals, of which some are among the most eminent journals in the field. As a member of scientific boards he took part in the organization of many scientific meetings, among which were the First Croatian Congress on Pharmacology and the First Croatian Congress on Neuroscience.

He was Deputy President of the Scientific Council of the Ruđer Bošković Institute (2004–2005) and Vice-President of the Croatian Society for Neuroscience (2003–2010), and a member of the following scientific societies: Society for Neuroscience, Society of Biological Psychiatry, Serotonin Club, Croatian Society for Neuroscience and the Croatian Pharmacological Society.

Apart from his scientific work, he was always interested in lexicography, and he combined his wide medical knowledge and knowledge of several foreign languages in an English-Croatian Medical Dictionary, published by Školske Knjige, of which he was author. He was also co-author of Italian-Croatian and Croatian-Italian dictionaries, and co-translator of a textbook on biochemistry. He was systematically engaged in Croatian pharmacological and neuroscientific terminology, and within the framework of COST programme, in which he participated as representative of the Republic of Croatia, he was initiator of the idea of a multilanguage dictionary on neuroscience.

And there is so much more...

All accidents are stupid and senseless. Yours has left us with a sense of guilt, because we feel that we never said all that we should have, and sorrow, which is particularly intense in those of those of us who had the good fortune to be your friend.

With sadness in our hearts and you in our thoughts.

Your friends,  
Lipa Čičin-Šain  
Darko Orešković