

THE FIRST AETHER NARCOSIS IN CROATIA

Five months after the first public demonstration of ether anaesthesia in Boston, ether anaesthesia was performed in Zadar, Croatia on March 13, 1847. It was the first aether anaesthetic in Croatia and the second one in Europe. The anaesthetic was prepared by Ivan Bettini and given to an 80-year old woman during an operation for incarcerated hernia by a team of surgeons – Cezar Pellegrini-Danieli, Jerolim Definis and Toma Fumagallo.

At the time of aether discovery Bettini was 31 and Fumagallo 36 years old and the two young colleagues soon recognized the importance of this epochal discovery. On March 13, 1847 Bettini performed the first aether anaesthetic in cooperation with Dr. Fumagallo. The procedure lasted 15 minutes and at the end of surgery the patient reported that she was fast asleep and felt no pain whatsoever. Dr. Bettini used about 15 mL of aether for the duration of 15 minutes and used an improvised apparatus consisting of a glass bowl with an aether-moistened sponge inside and a mouthpiece. It was a well-thought through, successfully and carefully performed procedure. The first report on the employment of aether anaesthesia was published the same day the procedure was performed in the Zadar newspaper *Gazzetta di Zara*. The article was written in a popular fashion, with simple and clear but precisely formulated descriptions with an agenda to rapidly popularize the new method. In his report Dr. Bettini concluded: »May this case provide courage to doctors and surgeons in our region who still doubt the successfulness of the method and the need for this great discovery, which deserves full attention of practitioners and diligent and detailed research«.



Dr. Ivan Bettini was born in Makarska in 1816. After graduating from high school in Zadar he enrolled into Medical University of Vienna and continued his studies in Padova. Graduating when he was only 22 years old Bettini soon received his first employment opportunity in Zadar where he remained until 1854. Known for his temper, liberal politics as well as self-sacrifice, Bettini left Zadar and transferred to Trieste in 1854 where he lived and worked as a well respected doctor until his death in 1888.

Dr. Toma Fumagallo was born in Zadar in 1811 and spent most of his childhood in Biograd. He graduated from high school in Zadar and proceeded with his medical studies in Padova and Pavia. He studied ophthalmology and general surgery. After graduating Dr. Fumagallo moved back to his hometown Zadar and worked as a highly respected doctor, known for his gentle manners, altruism and sensibility towards poor patients. He died at a young age of 39 during a journey from Zadar to Venice.

