
Report from the commemorative meeting held on 18 September 2001 in the lecture room of the School of Dental Medicine University of Zagreb

**Excerpts from the speech by the Dean of the School of Dental Medicine
Prof. Vlado Carek**

..... Our teacher of many years, scientist, medical worker at the School of Dental Medicine in Zagreb, and a doyen of Croatian dentistry, has left us for ever. Today, we bid farewell to a coworker of many years, our colleague and our good friend. Partings are always difficult and painful, particularly when we part for ever. It is hard to say a last farewell to a man who has been so close to us, both as a teacher and colleague and as a coworker and friend.

During the thirty years that Prof. Vladimir Amšel worked at the School he unselfishly offered his help to us all. He was always ready to listen and frequently helped in a practical way. The ability to listen and to have time for others was his life's motto

He was an exceptionally talented expert with immense experience, pedantic and demanding. He was equally respected by patients, nurses, students, coworkers and colleagues.

He passed the specialisation examination in Oral Surgery in 1972, as one of the first specialists in that branch of dental medicine. He was mentor for many physicians during specialisation, and Head of specialisation in Oral Surgery, and a member and President of the Examination Board for Specialisation, Ministry of Health. Because of his knowledge and reputation he became the Head of the Department of Oral Surgery at the School of Dental Medicine and Head of the Clinical Department of Oral Surgery at the Dental Clinic of the Clinical Hospital Centre in Zagreb.

He was an excellent teacher. All his lectures were well prepared and inspired, and he was one of the best in practical teaching. His scientific work mainly involved the field of oral surgery, particularly implantology. He participated in scientific projects concerned with the introduction of new methods in dental medicine. In 1983 he was elected Associate Member of the Academy of Medical Science of the Republic of Croatia

Apart from engagements in clinical work, teaching and scientific activities, it is impossible not to mention his dedication to the organisation of professional and scientific meetings, and also numerous courses for permanent training. Prof. Amšel devoted the whole of his working life to the development and advancement of his profession. He had exceptional ability to establish contact and cooperation in his own special way. He passed on his extensive knowledge and experience to many generations who today work and promote the development of dental medicine

The death of Prof. Amšel has been a great blow to us all.

Life is a gift which we must live in the right way. However, industriousness and a dedicated approach to work also represent a gift which is an integral part of life. Prof. Vladimir Amšel demonstrated this by his life's philosophy. He was a scientist and teacher, who, until his death, retained a human heart for all people, paternal for his own, goodness and life for all of us.

The inevitable fate that has occurred is a signal for us to remember the really important things in life, and to ignore the unimportant ones, which in any case take up too much of our time.

Vladimir Amšel was a friend, colleague and professor. His orderliness, perseverance and correctness was exemplary. It will be difficult to fill the emptiness which his death has left in our hearts and in our School.

Dear colleague Dr. Amšel, Sanja, Petra, only you can understand our pain. We owe your husband, father and grandfather our thanks. Thanks which we can no longer express personally.

He will be missed by all. We shall never forget him.

May he rest in peace.

Excerpts from the speech by the Head of the Department of Oral Surgery, Maxillofacial Surgery and Anaesthesiology with Reanimatology of the School of Dental Medicine in Zagreb, Prof. Pavel Kobler

Dear members of the Amšel family, colleagues, friends,

It is not easy to speak of one's teacher and at the same time of one's friend, whom I visited for the last time only a few hours before he died.

Dear Vlado! Ten days earlier you had been so full of optimism, and we hardly spoke of your illness, and more about everyday things, the School, the family, particularly about Petra, who you loved so much. You succeeded in passing on your love of sport, particularly skating, to Sanja and Petra, just as you had "infected" your coworkers with oral surgery during the period of study. During the student holidays day after day with your help we learned the ABC of oral surgery, rejoicing with every successfully extracted tooth. There were no computers, video films, games, internet and medline, and not even books and professional journals. We used to sit for hours and talk about the profession and patients, absorbing your knowledge and experience.

Many are not aware that although you were born in Zagreb, you completed part of your education in different places because of your father's occupation, and later graduated in Zagreb. At the same time you finished Middle Medical School, after which you graduated at the High School for Physical Education in Zagreb in 1948. In the same year you enrolled at the Medical School and graduated at the newly founded Department of Dental Medicine of the same School. They were hard times and so you were forced to work at the same time as a part-time teacher of physical education at the Middle Veterinary and Middle Technical Geodetic School. In fact it was just this training that helped you become such a successful dentist, and also the champion and representative of former Yugoslavia in the 110 m hurdles, the champion in skating, international skating trainer and valued international skating judge. On the other hand, with the knowledge of all the problems associated with the development of dental medicine, you were one of the founders and a lecturer at the School for Dental Assistants.

You started your successful career as a teacher at the School of Dental Medicine in Zagreb in 1960, as Assistant in the Department of Dental Surgery, headed by Dr. Dalibor Svoboda. You were also connected with the Dental Clinic at Šalata, Headed by the Academician, Ivo Čupar. You commenced work at our Department two years before Prof. Ivo Miše, with whom

you later successfully cooperated and established the oral-surgical discipline. It would probably be sufficient merely to say that up until retirement you had participated in the training of almost 30 generations of dentists. However, the work of a teacher has never been highly valued, in spite of which you realised your mission and became the students' teacher, father and friend. You always had patience and time for everyone, from your days as Assistant to Vice-Dean and Dean. We are sitting in the lecture room where you set up a monitor and for the first time in the history of the School you filmed an operation, which students were able to watch directly. In this way you brought them closer to oral surgery, improved teaching and organised what you called - Internal Television.

There was no area of oral surgery in which you had no interest, and thus the commencement of the development of dental implantology is connected with your work. Together we also organised the first course in implantology in Croatia. After retirement you continued to organise a postgraduate course in the above subject up until four years ago

You were the initiator of cooperation between our School and the School in Graz. Later this cooperation included the Dental Society, and thus the Croatian-Styrian Dental Days became a tradition during the time you were President of the Croatian Dental Society.

We remember how you worked with love and enthusiasm on the adaptation of Oral Surgery and the construction of the III floor and operating tract, in cooperation with the engineer, Mr. Balley. You were his advisor, supervisor and friend.

You paved the way for specialisation in oral surgery, and were the mentor for many residents, teaching them medical judgement and skill. For those of us who participated in the organisation of the Congress in Zadar in 1980, working and spending time with you will always be a very happy memory. We spent many wonderful days together and became very close. You always had time for celebration and fun. Celebrating your birthday on Kravarsko, which you loved so much, was unforgettable.

We, your closest coworkers, often used to say: our Prof. Amšel has only two faults: he is too honest and too good.

Thank you, may you rest in peace.

Excerpts from the farewell speech by Prof. Pavel Kobler at the Mirogoj Crematorium

Dear Vlado,

As though fate has taken a hand, you are leaving at a time when it seems as if the world has gone mad, when killing, revenge, vandalism, vulgarity, addiction, envy and animosity have become normal, everyday occurrences. This was not your world. You were so gentle, so good, always smiling, friendly, a real humanist, and you simply could not accept such things. You were engaged in athletics and skating at a time when sport was an honourable skill, a time when people became closer and friendships were made. Not like today's gladiatorial on the one hand and business on the other

Today many of your students are here, residents, post-graduates, and also grateful patients. They have come not only to honour a Professor, but also a friend, who understood them as an Assistant and later as Dean and Vice-Dean.

I was moved when, the day after the news of your death there was a minute of silence in your honour at the meeting of dentists in Opatija

At that meeting there were younger colleagues who had never had the privilege and luck to meet you or work with the long-term Head of the Department of Oral Surgery. Under your leadership we, today's workers in the Department, progressed. You left an indelible imprint on the teaching of dental medicine, the profession and science. Almost 30 generations acquired knowledge of oral surgery under your leadership. More than thirty oral surgeons work in the Republic, whose education was acquired under your mentorship

Although you retired as the Dean of the School of Dental Medicine, because you loved your work you continued to participate in postgraduate teaching of Dental Implantology, which was the subject of your great interest. You loved to drop in to the Department, where we would drink coffee, talk and exchange experience and opinions. You retired completely from dental medicine and oral surgery four years ago after deciding to stop taking part in postgraduate teaching. With your wife, Vera, you spent time in Kravarsko, and frequently visited Rabac, as you loved the sea. You were also able to spend more time with your daughter Sanja and adored granddaughter, Petra.

Although sadly, cruel disease had wasted your body, your cheerful spirit and optimism did not desert you right up until the end. You still had plans, but Vlado some things must remain for "the other side of the water". Together with your family we tried to ease your pain and help as much as we could. Some of the last words to your wife were: "bring my boys". As though there was something important you still wanted to say to us. Goran and I came, although physical contact was no longer possible. In any case Vlado, we are bound by deeper bonds.

Somebody once said: who lives in the thoughts of the dearest does not die but is far away, dead is the one who is forgotten.

Vlado, thank you, may you rest in peace.

Telegrams to the Dean and the Department of Oral Surgery of the School of Dental Medicine, and particularly the family were received from many colleagues and friends. We cite some words written by Prof. Vladimir Lapter, retired Professor of the School of Dental Medicine in Zagreb, and Dean from 1981 to 1985.

"Shocked by the loss of a friend of many years and an outstanding coworker, Prof. Vladimir Amšel. For health reasons I am unable to attend the commemoration and funeral and ask you in my name to express my sincere condolences to his family, colleagues and coworkers."

Vladimir Lapter

The School of Dental Medicine University of Zagreb, Departments of Oral Surgery of the Dental Clinic KBC Rebro and the Clinical Hospital Dubrava, Croatian Dental Society Croatian Medical Association and the Croatian Society of Oral Surgery Croatian Medical Association hereby thank all those who expressed their condolences.