

NEWS



Eighty Years of Pulmonology at the Sestre milosrdnice University Hospital

The first pulmonary department in Zagreb was founded at Saint Vincent de Paul Sisters of Mercy Hospital as early as 1919. The then physicians of this oldest Zagreb hospital, widely known as the Vinogradska Hospital, felt the need of establishing a pulmonary department intended exclusively for patients suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis and other pulmonary diseases. In those years, pulmonary tuberculosis was raging all over western Europe including Croatia. The epidemiologic state of pulmonary tuberculosis in Zagreb will be best illustrated by the article entitled *Zdravstvena politika Zagreba* (The Zagreb health policy), where Dr. Lujko Thaller says: "The town has not a single institution specialized for pulmonary tuberculosis. The municipality in which seven citizens die from phthisis a year, has no institution or at least a part of institution equipped to take any measures against phthisis". This quo-

tation illustrates the great need of opening a pulmonary department for the management of pulmonary tuberculosis. Dr. Lujko Thaller was the first head of the department, followed after several years by Dr. Hugo Botteri. It was the time when a remedy for tuberculosis had not yet been discovered, thus it was treated by hygienic-dietetic measures and collapse methods (maintaining pneumothorax, phrenic nerve exhaire, thoracoacoustics, thoracoplasty, etc.). After Dr. Hugo Botteri, the department was successfully headed by Head Doctor Milan Žepić until 1964. Owing to the great efforts invested by Head Doctor Milan Žepić, a new department for the treatment of tubercular patients from Zagreb was opened with the support from the Croatian Red Cross. In 1949, Head Doctor Stanko Dujmušić, who was quite successful in the treatment of pulmonary tuberculosis by collapse methods, came to the hospital. In 1951, he published his wide knowledge and experience in the field of operative thoracoscopy in his book *Atlas operativne torakoskopije* (Atlas of operative thoracoscopy) in Croatian and English language. With the discovery of streptomycin, followed by eutison and PAS, the epidemiologic situation of pulmonary tuberculosis changed substantially for the better. The decrease in the incidence of pulmonary tuberculosis with the introduction of new chemotherapeutics reduced the need of inhospital treatment of tubercular patients, who were referred for home treatment with regular control examinations at antitubercular dispensaries, while pulmonary wards were ever more admitting patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases (chronic bronchitis, asthma, and emphysema), pneumonia, and bronchial carcinoma.

The change in pulmonary pathology managed at the departments necessitated new diagnostic methods, a more active approach in the management of pulmonary tuberculosis, and additional training of the personnel. At that turning point (1964 - 1976), the department was headed by Head Doctor Stanko Krstić, who transformed the department for pulmonary tuberculosis into a department of pulmonology, thereby employing all diagnostic methods used in the hospital. In 1976, he was followed by Profes-

sor Rajko Pardon, M.D., Ph.D., who continued the idea initiated by Head Doctor Stanko Krstić, introduced new diagnostic methods, and included the department in the undergraduate and postgraduate education.

In 1990, the department was refurbished, new instruments were purchased, intensive respiratory unit was opened, and a new staff policy was introduced. Heading of the department was bestowed on Head Doctor Branimir Petrović, M.D., Ph.D., the incumbent head, who has successfully headed it during the war and postwar period. With his coworkers, he has successfully maintained the high professional level in spite of all restrictive measures and bed reduction. The department has 39 employees, including seven physicians (five pneumophthisiologists, and two internists - pulmonologists), three of them with Ph.D. degree, one with M.S. degree, and two head doctors); 21 nurses (six graduate nurses and 15 nurses); and auxiliary and administrative personnel. The department is an independent unit with 21 beds. On an average, 800 patients are treated, and 250 bronchoscopies, 4800 specialist examinations, 1300 consulting examinations, 2500 spirometries, and a number of other various procedures (e.g., pleural puncture, air exsufflation from the pleural space, thoracoscopy, etc.) performed per year on an average.

On November 19, 1999, the 80th anniversary of the work of the Department was celebrated. The ceremony was opened by Head Doctor Branimir Petrović, M.D., Ph.D., head of the Department, followed by Professor Željko Reiner, Minister of Health of the Republic of Croatia and patron of the meeting. The gathering was then addressed by Professor Zvonko Kusić, head of the Sestre milosrdnice University Hospital and dean of the Zagreb University

School of Medicine; Academician Ivo Padovan, president of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts; Head Doctor Egidio Čepulić, president of the Croatian Society of Pulmonology; and Đurđa Gec, RN, Department Head Nurse. The closing ceremony was preceded by awarding the scrolls of honor to the employees who had worked at the Department for more than 30 years as well as to a number of collaborating institutions.

The working part of the celebration included 12 papers presented by physicians from the Department of Pulmonology and some collaborating departments, where they described only a minor part of the Department activities. The professional section was followed by a pleasant social gathering.

In the eve of the celebration, on November 18, 1999, a memorial service for the late workers of the Department was held at Saint Blasius Church, which was followed by an occasional concert (Mihaela Skoko, soprano, and Ljiljana Grbac, organ).

We are thankful to all those who attended the celebration of the 80th anniversary of the oldest pulmonary department in Zagreb, and to our sponsors Belupo, Pliva, Glaxo-Wellcome, Roche, and Lek, as the celebration could not have been possible to organize without their precious help.

It is our wish and belief that the Department will continue working as successfully as to date, with due professional and scientific progress, along with other departments of the Sestre milosrdnice University Hospital, all this to the benefit of their patients.

Ivan Grbac