

## HISTORICAL REVIEW

A hundred years ago, an important notice was published in *Liečnički viestnik*, announcing that from September 3, 1900, women had also been permitted to enroll in medical studies. This great news was published in the short-line section (*Sitne vesti*), accompanied by a non-bylined comment.

Such comments were usually written by Editor-in-Chief. In the year 1900, Editor-in-Chief of the journal was Dr. Miroslav Čačković from *Sestre milosrdnice* Hospital (*Liečnički viestnik*, No. 10/1900, p. 371).

Dr. Čačković, already then a renowned physician from *Sestre milosrdnice* Hospital, later professor and first dean of the Zagreb School of Medicine, was bothered by the following: "It makes one wonder indeed why the action has been stopped half-way, having allowed the women access to medical sciences and liberal arts (since 1897) alone; if they are capable to work as physicians, why should not they also be capable to work as civil servants, judges, lawyers, priests? Likewise medical profession, none of these requires much physical strength and efforts in addition to mental and intellectual abilities. Is it maybe so because the legislators are jurists, and their medical counselors are civil servants or theoretically oriented professors? Should the lower mental and physical abilities be expected to arouse sympathy at long last, and to facilitate the process of learning, examinations and practice for female medical students, thus producing an inferior category of physicians?"

Had the respective decision been just in principle offensive to physicians, or he considered the women incompetent for the profession, remains unclear. However, he must have changed his mind, because some ten years later female physicians were regularly employed in the Hospital, the more so, one of them received special acknowledgment by her superior. It was Dr. Katinka Jakšić, assistant physician, at the time of World War I, and the acknowledgment was expressed and written by Dr. Radovan Marković, the first pediatrician at the Hospital and founder of the Hospital Department of Pediatrics in 1904. Physicians will probably like the letter, as nothing has really changed since that time in terms of the readiness to express thanks – gratitude is very rarely and frugally expressed in medical circles and elsewhere. Few are people and physicians such as Dr. Marković, who true-heartedly believe in the word and nobility of mind.

Already at that time, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, then rare female physicians made efforts to solve the dilemma relating to 'women in medicine' to their own advantage. Subsequent developments in medicine, and the number of women studying and graduating from medical schools and their professional work and achievements rank this story among 'short lines' and great historical mistakes.

*Tanja Sušec*

Projerenike za zdravstvo

Broj: 1718 sa 1918

Gospodini  
Dr. Katinke Jakšić  
 pomoćnoj liječnici u  
 bolnici milosrdnih sestara

u Zagrebu

Na izmaku kovanih godina dućan sam  
 izreči kahvalu i priznanje Vama, koji ste savjerno  
 i požrtvorno po svojoj narodnoj i xvaničnoj svijesti  
 za tih teških godina narodu i liječiti i blažiti tje  
 lesne i duševne patnje i nekriživali ga. Koliko je  
 najviše druga dućnost dopustala. Xvršnjte, molim,  
 svoje xvanje prema protušanim i dokaznim svojim  
 odlikama i u buduću, da i naš stališ uspiješno  
 uradi oko narodnoga preporoda.

U Zagrebu dne 30. prosinca 1918.

Dr. Marković

The letter by Dr. Radovan Marković to Dr. Katinke Jakšić from 1918 has been kept among records of the Sestre milosrdnice University Head Office at the Zagreb Municipal Archives.