

HISTORICAL REVIEW

Maternity Ward at our Hospital started working on April 1, 1947. Its 70-year existence is a significant period although it belongs to relatively young segments of the Hospital having celebrated 170th anniversary last year, where some professions had been established as early as the 19th century. However, establishing Maternity Ward only in 1947 was dictated by a number of reasons; the First National Maternity Ward in Zagreb was opened on November 1, 1877; Midwifery School started working one month later and both institutions were located at Sestre milosrdnice Hospital, then at the premises in Ilica 83. These two institutions operated independently of the Hospital and were led by Professor Antun Lobmayer, MD, a renowned physician responsible for the exemplary service offered to patients, as well as for excellent education of midwives. His textbook *Primaljstvo* (Midwifery) as the first one of the kind in Croatia had run through six editions. In 1905, Professor Lobmayer was succeeded by Dr Franjo Durst, a disciple of Theodor Wickerhauser, head of our Surgery Department; then already, Dr Durst unified gynecology and obstetrics at that so-called 'Old Maternity Ward'. In 1920, the two institutions moved to the new premises in Petrova, where Dr Franjo Durst actually developed the new Clinical Department of Gynecology of the Zagreb School of Medicine. In 1894, our Hospital moved to Vinogradska, but the maternity ward had to wait until 1947 to open. At that time, a great number of women still had their delivery performed at home. A midwife used to be called to attend the woman, while a physician was rarely called, i.e. only in case of some serious complications, especially in poor families. After World War II, owing to developments in medicine and popular health education, the proportion of women giving birth to their babies at maternity hospital increased, and the city of Zagreb established a new maternity ward at our Hospital, within Department of Gynecology and Obstetrics headed by Assist. Professor Srećko Zanella, located on the third floor of the building constructed in 1939. The Maternity Ward was organized to perform about 900 deliveries *per* year; there were 60 beds for pregnant women and parturients, two delivery



rooms with three beds each, isolation unit and so-called 'black delivery room' for pregnant women and parturients with preeclampsia and eclampsia. A small operating room was located elsewhere. In addition to the then modern organizational novelties and solutions, the greatest novelty was accommodation of newborns in special rooms with cribs separated by glass partitions. This information is very important, indicating due attention paid to hygiene, order, and both maternal and neonatal care. In the beginning, pediatricians from the Department of Pediatrics participated in the work of the Maternity Ward; later, the Ward employed a neonatologist, while care for prematures was provided in collaboration with pediatricians from the Division for Prematures, Department of Pediatrics. Special note should be made of the work and care provided by our midwives; besides care for their patients, they had another important task, just like the physicians, since the Maternity Ward served as a training unit for midwifery students and medical students. It was the beginning of our Maternity Ward 70 years ago; then, since then and today alike, most important is what Dr Branko Živković, our gynecologist, says in one of his poems: «How lovable, immensely dear the baby's first cry is!»¹.

Tanja Sušec

Reference

1. Živković B. Carski rez. In: Sve o Veneri (*Materia poetica et materia medica*). Zagreb: Klinička bolnica "Dr. Mladen Stojanović", 1989; p. 53. (in Croatian)