

Exhibition Museum Time Machine: The Collection of Folk Medicine as the Core of the Exhibition Display of the First Croatian Museum of Medicine



1. Visual identity of the exhibition, Scan (Design: Ante Rašić, Studio Rašić).



2. Central part of the exhibition display (Photo: Vanja Adžić).

The exhibition *Museum Time Machine: The Collection of Folk Medicine as the Core of the Exhibition Display of the First Croatian Museum of Medicine* was the second study exhibition mounted by the Croatian Museum of Medicine and Pharmacy of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts.¹ Since the Museum still has no exhibition premises of its own, the exhibition was held at the Palace of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, in the Strossmayer Gallery of Old Masters. The intended duration was from 12th April to 31st May 2017; however, due to great interest among the public, the exhibition was extended until 31st August. After the exhibition had been closed at the Strossmayer Gallery of Old Masters, it was moved – thanks to close cooperation with the Faculty of Pharmacy and Biochemistry of the University of Zagreb – to the Faculty on 13th September 2017, where it remained open for the public until 29th September.

¹ See more about the Croatian Museum of Medicine and Pharmacy of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts in: *Acta medico-historica Adriatica* 2016; 14(2): 201-210.

Besides a large number of individual visitors, many groups of students from Zagreb medical high schools – as agreed with the Croatian Museum of Medicine and Pharmacy of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts – visited the exhibition as well. On 10th May 2017, during the manifestation *Open Days of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts*, a presentation of the book published within the series of Academy publications entitled *Discussions and Material for the History of Science* under the title *Folk Medicine: Sources and Research*, including a comprehensive catalogue of the Collection of Folk Medicine with a scientific introductory text, was organised.

Exhibition authors were Professor Stella Fatović-Ferenčić, Ph.D., the Head of the Division for the History of Medical Sciences of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, and Silvija Brkić Midžić, the Manager of the Croatian Museum of Medicine and Pharmacy of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts. The entire Collection of Folk Medicine and the accompanying archive material was presented at the exhibition. The documentary and archive material evoked the process of the establishing of the collection, while the exhibition visually followed the display of the first Croatian Museum of Medicine. The exhibition contained 323 items, described in 164 inventory inscriptions. The items were divided into the following thematic units: blood drawing kits; folk surgical instruments and their descriptions; folk medications of mineral, herbal and animal origins; amulets, apotropaic items and jewellery for protection against diseases and spells; Christian votive items: medallions – protection charms, holy pictures, votives, Christian inscriptions; Muslim inscriptions



3. Showcase with votives (Photo: Vanja Adžić).



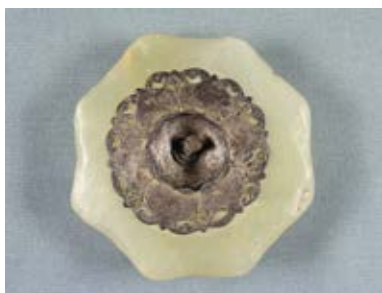
4. Interactive part of the exhibition with herbal teas (Photo: Antonio Blaži).



5. Exhibition opening at the Faculty of Pharmacy and Biochemistry of the University of Zagreb (Photo: Duško Ivan Granić).



6. Folk abortion instruments, Osijek surroundings, 1942, HMMF-564 (Photo: Goran Kos).



7. Milk stone, HMMF-553 (Photo: Goran Kos).

and inscription boxes; photographs related to folk medicine; folk medicine books; etc. The items originated from the period between the 18th century and the first half of the 20th century, mainly from the continental part of Croatia, and from Bosnia and Herzegovina – mostly from the surrounding areas of Bihać, Banja Luka, Derвента, and Tuzla. A special point of interest and worth of the collection lies in the fact that it originated from the first Croatian Museum of Medicine; it was thus possible to accurately reconstruct the process of its coming to be. This fact is primarily owed to the circumstances of its connection with the forming of the *Health History Museum* of the Croatian Medical Association, as well as to the efforts of two distinguished medical doctors and protagonists of the project – Vladimir Čepulić and Stanko Sielski.

The Division of the History of Medical Sciences of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts has in its safekeeping the Čepulić – Sielski correspondence held between the years 1942 and 1943, which reveals the circumstances, the manner and the purpose

of collecting items for the Museum, among which are also those that today form the Collection of Folk Medicine of the Croatian Museum of Medicine and Pharmacy. The correspondence between these two medical doctors excellently discloses not only the background of the emergence of the collection, but also the locations where the items were collected, as well as networks of persons whom Sielski visited, contacted and introduced as associates in this project. After two years of activities related to collecting, which were carried out in rather difficult wartime circumstances, and following intensive preparations, the Medical Association's *Health History Museum* was open on

29th January 1944 and presented to the public. Vladimir Ćepulić held a lecture accompanied by photographs of the exhibited items, and subsequently published in the journal *Medical Association Herald*. From that period, handwritten or machine-written captions describing individual items have been preserved (and used for the purposes of the exhibition *Museum Time Machine*), while a part of the material has been kept in their original form on framed exhibition boards – or rather a kind of shallow wall showcases with items, drawings or photographs, and accompanying captions. The Collection of Folk Medicine of the Croatian Museum of Medicine and Pharmacy of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts is thus relevant for two reasons: as a memory of the efforts of the older generations of Croatian medical doctors and historians of medicine related to the establishing of the Museum of Medicine; and as folk medicine heritage collected and kept in a planned manner.

The exhibition was mounted to mark the 100th anniversary of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Zagreb, as well as the 135th anniversary of the university pharmacy study programme in Croatia.

The exhibition was realised thanks to the support of the City Office for Education, Culture and Sports of the City of Zagreb; the Croatian Medical Association; and the Foundation of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts.



8. Folk healers in Bosnia, exhibition board with photographs, HMMF-520 (Photo: Goran Kos).



9. Blood drawing horn, HMMF-458 (Photo: Goran Kos).



10. Box for inscriptions against diseases and spells, HMMF-521 (Photo: Goran Kos).