THE TWENTY-YEAR RISE OF PSYCHIATRIC SCIENCE IN MOSTAR

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INTRODUCTION

The first department for neuropsychiatry consisting of five hospital beds was opened in Mostar in 1962. Apart from the medical staff, the department did not have at its disposal any special diagnostic tests and procedures. Only one neuropsychiatrist (Dr Ante Herceg) was employed at the department, and he completed his specialization in Zagreb. Dr Herceg headed the department and performed daily activities alongside running the outpatient clinic at the Health Centre Mostar. Prior to that, neurological and psychiatric patients were treated at the Department of Internal Medicine and other departments in Mostar, and more severe cases were referred to the neuropsychiatric hospital in Sarajevo, or rarely to Zagreb and Belgrade.

In the mid-80s, special departments within neurology and psychiatry were separated but neuropsychiatric specialists worked on both departments. During the last war (1992-95), neuropsychiatry in Mostar was devastated and declined dramatically. At the time, neuropsychiatric science and scientific work in Mostar were at its minimum. There was only one university professor, Dr Džemal Džudža who dealt mainly with neurology and one doctor of science, a neuropsychiatrist, Mulija Džudža who dealt mainly with psychiatry. Scientific activities were very rare and at a relatively low levels.

After the last war (1997), the School of Medicine was established within the University of Mostar and at the same time specializations separated to psychiatry and neurology. The establishment of the School of Medicine in Mostar and the arrival of "world-class professors" mostly from the Republic of Croatia gave great impetus to the development of science in all disciplines and today it is safe to say that post-war psychiatry in scientific terms belongs to the top of Mostar and Bosnia and Herzegovina's scientific achievements. Psychiatrists from Mostar organise and actively participate in numerous scientific conferences, international psychiatric projects, write and publish scientific papers, publish books, and in various ways motivate and arouse the interest of students and younger colleagues in psychiatry and psychiatric science. The objective of this study is to briefly present the development and success of post-war psychiatric science in Mostar.

SCIENTIFIC GATHERINGS

Thanks to the head of the course Professor Miro Jakovljević, psychiatry lectures are motivating for both the students and teaching assistants, many of whom enrol in doctoral studies. Today in Mostar we have five doctors of science in the field of psychiatry, and soon seven more psychiatrists should receive their doctoral degrees.

Thanks to the Department of Psychiatry at the School of Medicine in Mostar, the international one-day symposium Mostar Psychiatric Saturday was organized for the first time in 2004 on the topic: Personality, Anxiety and Depression in Modern Medicine and Psychiatry. The Mostar Psychiatric Saturday is organized 16 years in a row, every first Saturday in June and each symposium addresses one current topic (Babić et al. 2014, 2017). After three symposiums, materials were printed in books and became university textbooks at the School of Medicine in Mostar (Jakovljević 2006, 2008, 2010).

Thanks to the experience gained through organization of psychiatric Saturdays, very positive evaluations for the organizers, and some fortunate circumstances in Mostar, we were able to organize a regional European psychiatric congress. In the period from October 5 to October 8, 2008, the 23rd Danube Psychiatry symposium was held in Mostar on the topic: Brave new integrative psychiatry: from early recognition to successful treatment. The congress was attended by over 200 participants from 11 countries from Europe and Africa. All members of the Department of Psychiatry took an active role in this regional European congress and thus demonstrated our strength and position in modern academic psychiatry and positively promoted Mostar psychiatry in this part of Europe. According to the presidency of the Association of Psychiatrists of Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H), the Mostar Psychiatric Saturday is one of the most important psychiatric events in B&H. The number of lectures at psychiatric Saturdays from our department increases year after year, our lectures are better in quality and more noticeable, and teachers from our department receive frequent guest speaker invitations for psychiatric events in the region. The number of scientific and professional papers we publish also increases year after year. Considering all the positive facts, we can rightly say that the Mostar Psychiatric Saturday was and remains the beacon...
the following projects:

- The psychological processes and traumatic stress reactions in war and torture survivors. Leader of this international project was Professor Metin Basoglu, London, Gret Brytany (1999-2005).


- “Comorbidity of mental disorders and physical illnesses”, project of the Federal Ministry of Education and Science of Bosnia and Herzegovina (project leader, Professor Dragan Babić; 2011-2013). The following works were published as a part of this project: Martinac et al. 2014, 2018, Pavlović et al. 2015, 2016, Bjelanović et al. 2015.

- “Molecular mechanisms of posttraumatic stress disorder” (the head researcher for Mostar and leader of this regional European project was Professor Jurgen Deckert, Wuerzburg, Germany; 2013-2019). The following works were published as a part of this project: Kulenović et al. 2017, 2019, Ziegler et al. 2017, two papers in highly indexed journal Nature Communications (Nievergelt et al. 2018, 2019), and one paper in Sleep (Lind et al. 2020). Thanks to this project, nine doctoral students from B&H, Republic of Croatia and Kosovo published their scientific papers in the journal Psychiatria Danubina.


CONCLUSION

In the last few decades, the number of lecturers from the Department of Psychiatry is increasing at different local, regional, European, and international events, and teachers from our department receive frequent guest speaker invitations for psychiatric events in the region. The number of published scientific and professional works is also increasing every year, so we can safely conclude that the psychiatric science in Mostar has experienced a positive post-war rise and growth which certainly alongside other factors contributes and helps treat people with mental disorders.

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Dragan Babić & Marko Martinac: concept and design of article, literature searches, writing manuscript, approval of final version.
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