

## PROF. THEODOR DÜRRIGL, MD, PHD (10<sup>th</sup> September 1926 – 20<sup>th</sup> July 2022)



Our dear professor, teacher, distinguished gentlemen, friend, a legendary figure in Croatian rheumatology, physiatrist, rheumatologist, humanist, publicist, editor, lexicographer, encyclopedist, polyglot, erudite scholar and intellectual *par excellence*, Theodor Dürrigl has passed away in July 2022, at the age of 96.

I am one of many people who knew Professor Dürrigl enough to write something about him and I took on that task with great pride and honor. This is a personal take on my experience with my first rheumatology teacher who made quite an impression on me while I was still a young student. He had a special skill in which he was able to cover complex topics, that might have seemed unremarkable and boring at first, in a clear and concise way. He was an extremely eloquent lecturer, enthusiastic clinician and a great scientist. He taught us how to become excellent clinicians and perform our duties in the best possible way, with a personal approach to the patient. He familiarized us with science and taught us how to interact with well-chosen words and beautifully crafted sentences, in a way that would be never too much and never too little. This man introduced many people to the world of rheumatology and is responsible for raising many generations of doctors

who have come to realize the seriousness and the challenge of “rheumatism and bone pain” in clinical medicine through his work. In his time, there were no “miracle” biological drugs for inflammatory rheumatic diseases, so in addition to the pharmacotherapy of that time, he highlighted the importance of targeted kinesitherapy, the application of physical agents, and above all, the patience of both patients and doctors. He emphasized the value of teamwork and fostered the idea that each member of the team was equally valuable to him in achieving the therapeutic goal. These principles are still valid today. Hierarchically speaking, he was at the top of the “knowledge pyramid”, and he still treated everyone with the same politeness and warmth, regardless of their status. By propagating the science community’s interest in locomotor system diseases, he was able to achieve and encourage cooperation with other specialties apart from rheumatology. At the Department of Rheumatology and Rehabilitation, regular meetings were held with radiologists, orthopedists and internists in order to find the best solution for patients suffering from rheumatic diseases. He had a way of listening to his interlocutor and really hearing what they had to say, which could be noted from the animated look behind

his glasses and at times, in justifiable situations, from his somewhat cynical questions and comments. His refined humor was always well-received at the informal gatherings at our rheumatology congresses that he attended for as long as he could, when his health was in good condition. He would bring a dose of warmth, understanding and respect to each conversation. Throughout his career he fought for the progress of rheumatology, which was traditionally neglected in comparison to other medical specialties. He was the first physician in Croatia who systematically covered the topics of rheumatic diseases and their pharmacotherapy, with a primary emphasis on the basic treatment of rheumatoid arthritis. In 1966, Theodor Dürrigl and his associates wrote the first set of notes for learning rheumatology, and I still have the third and final edition from 1975. Through all these years and the “turmoil” that rheumatology in Croatia has endured, we managed to develop a great team of excellent rheumatologists, so today Croatian rheumatology has earned its rightful place on the rheumatology map of Europe and the rest of the world. In addition to rheumatology, his great passion was the study of Croatian language, as evidenced by his vigorous work at the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts

(CASA). He also loved to unwind with classical music and art. He was also an avid photographer. Before he retired, he generously left us a bunch of photos and slides related to teaching at the Department. He transferred certain parts of his interests onto some of us, encouraging us to think and write in a scientific and literate, clinically logical and ethical way, and to turn every working day into an interesting experience. It was a true honor and privilege to work with Professor Dürriegl.

He was born on October 10<sup>th</sup>, 1926, in Zagreb, the city in which he finished his studies and spent almost all of his life in. After the death of his first wife Zsuzsa, he dedicated his life to being a loving father to his daughter, Marija-Ana, who decided to follow in her father's footsteps by also becoming a scientist. He graduated from the School of Medicine in Zagreb in 1953, and he finished his internship in Zrenjanin. His first workplace in Zagreb was at the Central Rheumatism Institute "Dr. Dora Filipović" at Ul. Antuna Mihanovića (today's Polyclinic for Rheumatic Diseases, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation "Dr. Drago Čop"), where he worked from 1956 until 1966. At this Institute, he specialized in Physical Medicine and passed the specialty certification exam. Following this, he started working at UHC Zagreb (Rebro), where he performed the duties of the Head of the Division of Rheumatology and Rehabilitation, which later became the Department of Rheumatology and Rehabilitation of the University Hospital Centre of the School of Medicine in Zagreb. He retired in 1992.

His abundant academic career started in 1964, with the defense of the doctoral dissertation titled *Osobitosti reumatoidnog artritisa u muškaraca* (in English: "Particularities of rheumatoid arthritis in men"). In 1966 he was elected Assistant Professor at the School of Medicine, where he taught a course named "Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation", and in 1975 he became a full

professor at the Department for Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. He was a member of several university commissions and boards as well as a vice dean. At the initiative of Professor Dürriegl and Professor Zdenko Radošević, the Rheumatology study program was introduced, which enabled rheumatology to be included in the postgraduate curriculum of the School of Medicine. In 1978, the first postgraduate study program in Rheumatology was conducted in collaboration with the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and the Department of Internal Medicine.

He was a regular member of the Croatian Academy of Medical Sciences (CAMS) since it was founded in 1961 and he became its laureate in 2009. He was also a member of its Senate. In 1986, he became an associate member of the Department of Medical Sciences of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts (CASA), and from 2000 until his death he was the Chairman of its Committee on Medical Lexicography. He was the assistant editor-in-chief of the *Encyclopaedia of Medicine*, *Lexicon of Medicine*, expert editor of the *Dictionary of the Human and Veterinary Medicine Terminology* and the editor of the medical profession of the *Croatian Encyclopedia* at the Miroslav Krleža Institute of Lexicography.

In 1967, at the Croatian Medical Association (CMA), he founded the independent Rheumatology Section of the CMA (today known as the Croatian Society for Rheumatology), as part of the Section of Rheumatology, Physical Medicine and Balneoclimatology, which he was the Chairman of for almost ten years. For many years he held classes for future physiotherapists, so in 2013 he became one of the laureates of the University of Applied Health Sciences in Zagreb.

From 1963 to 1991, he was the initiator and editor-in-chief of the *Reumatizam* (in English: "Rheumatism") journal, which is still published today. He was a member of

the editorial board of the journals *Liječnički vjesnik*, *Acta Medica Croatica*, *Zeitschrift für Rheumatologie*, *Archives of Interamerican Rheumatology* and many others. He was awarded an honorary membership by the Croatian Medical Association, the Croatian Society for Rheumatology and the German, Austrian, Czechoslovak, Slovenian and Argentinian Rheumatology Society.

It is difficult to know for certain, and let alone mention all his achievements, papers, memberships in various committees, commissions, and editorial boards of various professional domestic and international journals, as well as all of his awards, recognitions, medals and honorary memberships. He published over 470 scientific and professional papers in domestic and international publications, including seven books, and was the invited author of 14 chapters in books, as well as domestic and international textbooks. He held countless wonderful lectures to students, nurses and physiotherapists, and numerous presentations at congresses that were attended by hundreds of doctors of various medical specialties. After he retired, he still remained active for a short time as a clinician, he published several articles and chapters in books and he co-authored a university textbook titled *Klinička reumatološka radiologija* with his colleague Prof. Kristina Potočki, MD, PhD. He was an avid lexicographer until the last days of his life.

Thank you, Professor and may you rest in peace!

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR  
ĐURĐICA BABIĆ-NAGLIĆ,  
MD, PhD  
retired physiatrist  
and rheumatologist

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## PROF. DR. SC. THEODOR DÜRRIGL

(10. 10. 1926. – 20. 7. 2022.)



U mjesecu srpnju 2022. godine u 96. godini preminuo je naš Theodor Dürrigl, profesor, učitelj, gospodin, prijatelj, legenda hrvatske reumatologije, fizijatar, reumatolog, humanist, publicist, urednik, leksikograf, enciklopedist, poliglot, erudit, intelektualac *par excellence*.

Jedna sam od mnogih koji bi mogli pisati o profesoru Dürriglu i s ponosom sam prihvatila tu časnu zadaću. Ovo je osobni doživljaj moga prvog reuma-učitelja koji me se dojmio još u studentskim danima svojim jasnim i konciznim iznošenjem složenih, a na prvi pogled nezanimljivih tema. Bio je iznimno elokventan predavač, zanesen kliničar i znanstvenik. Učio nas je kliničkom radu na najljepši mogući način – svojim pristupom bolesniku. Približio nam je znanost učeći nas biranim riječima i lijepim rečenicama, nikada ni previše ni premalo. To je čovjek koji je mnoge uveo u svijet reumatologije i odgojio generacije liječnika koji su tako spoznali ozbiljnost i izazov „reume, kostobolje“ u kliničkoj medicini. U njegovo vrijeme nije bilo „čudotvornih“ bioloških lijekova za upalne reumatske bolesti pa je uz tadašnju farmakoterapiju isticao važnost ciljane kineziterapije i aplikacije fizikalnih agensa, a nadalje strpljenje bolesnika i liječnika. Njegovao je timski rad u kojemu mu je svaki član bio jednako vrijedan u ostvarenju terapijskoga cilja. Sve su to načela koja vrijede i danas. Hijerar-

hijski gledano, bio je na vrhu, a sa svima se ophodio jednako pristojno i toplo, neovisno o statusu. Šireći interes za bolesti sustava za kretanje ostvario je i poticao suradnju s drugim specijalnostima. U Klinici za reumatske bolesti i rehabilitaciju održavali su se redoviti sastanci s radiolozima, ortopedima i internistima s traženjem najboljeg rješenja za reumatskog bolesnika. Znao je slušati i čuti sugovornika, što se vidjelo iz njegova živahnog pogleda iza naočala i katkada, opravdano, pomalo ciničnih pitanja i komentara. Rafinirana doza humora pratila je neformalna druženja na našim reumatološkim kongresima na kojima je bio je gost dokle god mu je to zdravlje dopuštalo. U svaki je razgovor unosio puno topline, razumijevanja i poštovanja. Cijeli radni vijek borio se za napredak reumatologije koja je tradicionalno bila zanemarena u odnosu na druge specijalnosti. Prvi se u Hrvatskoj počeo sustavno baviti reumatskim bolestima i njihovom farmakoterapijom, prvenstveno temeljnim liječenjem reumatoidnog artritisa. Theodor Dürrigl sa suradnicima napisao je 1966. prva skripta za učenje reumatologije, a treće i zadnje izdanje iz 1975. i danas čuvam. Kroz sve ove godine i „nevere“ kojima je reumatologija u Hrvatskoj bila izložena stasala je ekipa vrsnih reumatologa pa danas hrvatska reumatologija ima svoje mjesto na europskoj i svjetskoj reumatološkoj

karti. Osim reumatologije velika strast bilo mu je proučavanje hrvatskog jezikoslovlja, što dokazuje njegov neumorni rad u Hrvatskoj akademiji znanosti i umjetnosti (HAZU), opuštanje uz klasičnu glazbu i umjetnost. Aktivni hobi bila mu je fotografija. Kada je odlazio u mirovinu u Klinici nam je velikodušno ostavio gomilu fotografija i dijapozitiva vezanih za nastavu. Dio svojih interesa prenio je na neke od nas želeći da mislimo i pišemo znanstveno i pismeno, klinički logično i etično te svaki radni dan pretvorimo u zanimljivo iskustvo. Bila je privilegija raditi s profesorom.

Rođen je u Zagrebu 10. listopada 1926., gdje se školovao i proveo praktično cijeli životni vijek. Nakon smrti prve supruge Zsuzse bio je brižan otac kćeri Marije-Ane koja na neki način ide očevim stopama, baveći se znanostima. Medicinski fakultet završio je u Zagrebu 1953., a potom stažirao u Zrenjaninu. Prvo radno mjesto u Zagrebu bila mu je Centralna reuma-stanica u Mihanovićevoj ulici (sada Poliklinika za reumatske bolesti, fizikalnu medicinu i rehabilitaciju „Dr. Drago Čop“) u kojoj je radio od 1956. do 1966. godine. Ondje je specijalizirao fizikalnu medicinu i položio specijalistički ispit. Nakon toga odlazi u KBC Zagreb na Rebro, gdje je do 1991. bio predstojnik Zavoda za reumatske bolesti i rehabilitaciju, kasnije Klinike za

reumatske bolesti i rehabilitaciju Kliničkoga bolničkog centra Medicinskog fakulteta u Zagrebu. Umirovljen je 1992. godine.

Njegova bogata akademska karijera započinje obranom doktorske disertacije 1964. godine pod naslovom *Osobitosti reumatoidnog artritisa u muškaraca*. Godine 1966. izabran je za docenta na Medicinskom fakultetu za predmet Fizikalna medicina i rehabilitacija, a 1975. postaje redoviti profesor na Katedri za fizikalnu medicinu i rehabilitaciju. Bio je član više fakultetskih povjerenstava i odbora te prodekan. Na inicijativu profesora Dürriгла i profesora Zdenka Radoševića oblikovan je program studija reumatologije, pa je tako ona ušla na mala vrata u poslijediplomski nastavni plan Medicinskog fakulteta. Godine 1978. održan je prvi poslijediplomski studij iz reumatologije u suradnji Katedre za fizikalnu medicinu i rehabilitaciju te Katedre za internu medicinu.

Redoviti član Akademije za medicinske znanosti Hrvatske (AMZH) bio je od njezina osnutka 1961. i njezin laureat za 2009. godinu; bio je i članom njezina Senata. Godine 1986. postaje član suradnik Razreda za medicinske znanosti Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti (HAZU), a od 2000. do smrti bio je voditelj njezina Obora za medicinsku leksikografiju. U Lesiko-

grafskom zavodu Miroslav Krleža bio je pomoćnik glavnog urednika *Medicinske enciklopedije*, *Medicinskog leksikona*, stručni urednik *Enciklopedijskog rječnika humanog i veterinarskoga medicinskog nazivlja* te urednik medicinske struke u *Hrvatskoj općoj enciklopediji*.

Godine 1967. u Hrvatskom liječničkom zboru (HLZ), a u okviru Sekcije za reumatologiju, fizikalnu medicinu i balneoklimatologiju osnovao je samostalnu Reumatološku sekciju HLZ-a (danas Hrvatsko reumatološko društvo, HRD/HLZ) čiji je predsjednik bio gotovo deset godina. Dugi niz godina održavao je nastavu budućim fizioterapeutima, pa je 2013. bio jednim od laureata Visokoga zdravstvenog učilišta u Zagrebu.

Od 1963. do 1991. bio je pokretač i glavni urednik časopisa *Reumatizam* koji i danas izlazi. Član uredništva ili uredničkog savjeta bio je u časopisima *Liječnički vjesnik*, *Acta Medica Croatica*, *Zeitschrift für Rheumatologie*, *Archives of Interamerican Rheumatology* i drugima. Hrvatski liječnički zbor, Hrvatsko reumatološko društvo te njemačko, austrijsko, čehoslovačko, slovensko i argentinsko reumatološko društvo dodijelili su mu počasna članstva.

Teško je znati, a kamo li spomenuti sve njegove domete, radove, članstva u različitim odbori-

ma i povjerenstvima, uredništvima stručnih domaćih i stranih glasila, nagrade, priznanja, ordene i počasna članstva. Objavio je više od 470 znanstvenih i stručnih radova u domaćim i međunarodnim publikacijama, od toga sedam knjiga, bio je pozvani autor 14 poglavlja u knjigama, domaćim i stranim udžbenicima. Održao je bezbroj divnih predavanja studentima, medicinskim sestrama i fizioterapeutima, brojna izlaganja na kongresima čule su stotine liječnika različitih specijalnosti. Po umirovljenju još se kratko bavio kliničkim radom, objavio je nekoliko članaka i poglavlja u knjigama, a s prof. dr. sc. Kristinom Potočki napisao je 2011. sveučilišni udžbenik *Klinička reumatološka radiologija*. Do zadnjih dana života bio je posvećen leksikografiji.

Hvala, gospodine profesore, i počivali u miru!

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