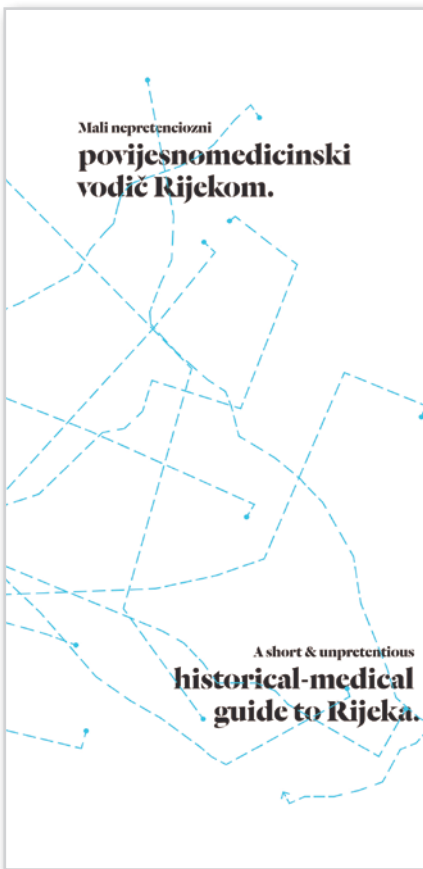


Toni Buterin, Robert Doričić, Amir Muzur

## A Short & Unpretentious Historical-Medical Guide to Rijeka. On the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Faculty of Medicine in Rijeka



In the year in which the institution looks back to 1955 and its founding, the volume *A Short & unpretentious Historical-Medical Guide to Rijeka. On the 70th Anniversary of the Faculty of Medicine in Rijeka* (211 pp.) was published. The guide is authored by Toni Buterin, Robert Doričić, and Amir Muzur, long-standing contributors to the field of medical historiography. Amir Muzur, Professor of the History of Medicine at the Faculty of Medicine in Rijeka, previously published the seminal monograph *The Unfinished History of Medicine in Rijeka* (2013) and now co-authors this work aimed at popularizing historical-medical knowledge. His colleague from the Department of Social Sciences and Medical Humanities, Robert Doričić, leads the Faculty's Alumni organization and directs the internal project *Oral History of the Rijeka Faculty of*

*Medicine*. Toni Buterin serves as secretary of the Croatian Scientific Society for the History of Health Culture and has for many years been a member of the editorial board of *Acta medico-historica Adriatica*, the central Croatian journal devoted to the history of medicine.

The selected format and visual presentation of the guide reflect the authors' and publisher's intention to approach the past as a lens through which the future may be envisioned. This perspective is explicitly articulated in the foreword by the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, who emphasizes that "the history of medicine represents an inspiration, a source of encouragement, and a wellspring of ideas on the occasion of the Faculty's 70th anniversary".

The chapter titles are stylistically polished and crafted to engage the reader through their conceptual intrigue. Reflecting the publication's forward-oriented framework, the guide opens with the chapter *The Silk Road of Rijeka Pharmacy*. The decision to begin with the Adriatic Galenic Laboratory—whose modern facility in Svilno opened in 2015—is explained by the authors as starting from "a testing ground of the future from which entire flocks of development ideas and initiatives take flight," which serves as the "future point from which our own journey into the past begins."

This developmental orientation continues in the subsequent chapter dedicated to Sušak (*Sušak: From Summer Residence and Banovina Hospital to the Hospital for Women and Children*). Notably, this chapter precedes the discussion of Rijeka proper, an arrangement that deviates from conventional historical ordering. The reasoning lies in the recent opening of the new clinical wing of the Clinical Hospital Center. The narrative then transitions to the Marian shrine dating to the late thirteenth century, the fifteenth-century Franciscan monastery, the monastic pharmacy and its medicinal herbs, votive images, and the medical literature preserved in the monastery library (*Trsat: A Story of Faith and Health*). Throughout, the authors avoid rigid adherence to form; they proceed geographically from east to west, without being strictly constrained by chronology, though they acknowledge it in a subtle and unobtrusive manner.

The guide then moves toward the city center in the chapter *Adamić's Houses and Rijeka's Diseases*. Rijeka landowner Šimun Adamić owned the building in which, in 1818, women affected by the so-called Škrljevo disease were hospitalized. Named after a locality east of Rijeka, this disease attracted attention within the broader European medical community and brought several contemporary experts to the region. Among them was Giovanni Battista Cambieri, Rijeka's *protofi-*

sico, associated with the early development of the municipal Hospital of the Holy Spirit during the first half of the nineteenth century.

The guide is not solely a narrative about the medical past; it simultaneously illuminates essential elements of the city's cultural history. These include, for example, information about the Rijeka gymnasium situated in Adamić's house on Fiumara or the architects responsible for the design of several significant buildings. The authors adeptly present these details, uncovering connections between the city's cultural heritage and its medical history—for instance, tracing the architects of buildings inhabited by distinguished physicians.

The origins of healthcare institutions in the city can be traced to the late Middle Ages, when several hospitals operated in the urban area. Among them, the Holy Spirit Hospital, situated next to the parish Church of the Assumption (the Leaning Tower), is the best known, though not the only one. The chapter *The Old Town of Old Hospitals* examines these medieval institutions that provided care for the sick and the poor, located near the parish church, beside which the Pharmacy Museum has been situated since 2020. This museum has, in recent years, played a significant role in the public history of medicine in Rijeka.

Crossing Korzo, the chapter *The City's Poured Aorta* addresses, among other topics, the city's public health policies at the end of the 18th century, when the municipal administration employed a physician, a surgeon, and two midwives. The chapter *The Building That Heals and Greets* focuses on the Grossich Sanatorium, an institution containing twenty rooms and roughly one hundred patient beds, which subsequently became a maternity hospital. It is also the site where the distinguished physician Viktor Finderle worked.

The chapter *The Wheel That Replaces Shame with Hope*—a title that evokes a strong sense of compassion in the contemporary reader—discusses the practice, common in the second half of the 19th century, of abandoning unwanted newborns at a window equipped with a rotating wheel, located to the right of the main entrance of the city hospital. The building, at today's address Fiorello La Guardia 1 (formerly Piazza Cambieri), opposite the Maritime Faculty, housed the City Hospital of the Holy Spirit (*Ospedale civico di Santo Spirito*) from 1823 until the 1930s.

The chapter *The Sugar and Tobacco Factory That Became a Library and a Museum* includes a discussion of Rijeka's sources of potable water. It also considers the city's lazarettos (quarantine stations, used for isolating maritime travelers), including the 18th-century Saint Charles lazaretto and the 19th-century facility in Martinšćica.

The building at today's Viktora Cara Emina 5, originally opened in 1942 as the House of Municipal Care (*Casa dell'assistenza*), became home in 1947 to the School of Nursing with its own dormitory. This historical development is reflected in the chapter title *On the Professions Brought Forth by Obstetricians and Revived by Anesthesiologists*. Since 2014, the Faculty of Health Studies has been located in the same building.

A neo-classical structure built in 1857 for the Austro-Hungarian Naval Academy served educational purposes for fifty years. After the First World War, during the period of Italian administration, the City Hospital of the Holy Spirit was relocated to this building. After 1945, it was renamed the Sobol Brothers Hospital in memory of two physicians, Ivan and Mate Sobol, who died during the war. Since the 1980s, the Rijeka Clinical Hospital Center (KBC Rijeka) has unified several facilities: the Sušak hospital (Dr. Zdravko Kučić), the Rijeka hospital (Brothers Dr. Sobol), the Kantrida Children's Hospital, the Orthopedic Hospital in Kraljevica, and the Pulmonary Hospital in Ičići.

The chapter describing the Faculty of Medicine building—*The Faculty Built by Pure Kindness*—examines the philanthropic contribution of brothers Antonio and Costantino Branchetta, members of a wealthy Rijeka family who donated 550,000 crowns for the construction of a large poorhouse. This Art Nouveau building became home to the city's poor until, in 1955, it was reassigned to the newly established Faculty of Medicine in Rijeka. The establishment in Mlaka of what is today the Teaching Institute of Public Health and the County Health Center—symbols of the integration of preventive and curative healthcare—is associated with Kajetan Blečić, a student of Andrija Štampar, who declined a prestigious position at the World Health Organization in order to remain in the region.

Following the main chapters, the guide presents several independent texts. *Medicine and Politics in the Rijeka Context* analyzes the considerable number of medical professionals who assumed political functions at the municipal, national, and European levels. Importantly, the presentation of the history of medicine in Rijeka transcends earlier national and ideological divisions that have often shaped historiographical interpretations of the city's past. One illustrative case is the internationally recognized physician Antonio Grossich, whose role in political events concerning Rijeka's state affiliation led post-war memory culture to marginalize his contributions to medical and public health history. The guide successfully avoids such selective interpretations, fulfilling the authors' promise from the opening chapter to embark on a "walk (...) that looks into the bushes to the left and right of the path, venturing into the many side passages of the past."

A *Timeline* then presents key chronological markers in Rijeka's medical history. Short biographies of thirteen selected individuals appear under the heading *Mentioned in the Text, Never Enough in Memory*. These include Giovanni Battista Cambieri (1754–1838), Georg Catti (1849–1923), Giovanni Dalma (1895–1977), Viktor Finderle (1902–1964), Vinko Frančišković (1919–1984), Antonio Felice Giacich (1813–1898), Antonio Grossich (1849–1926), Lionello Lenaz (1872–1939), Ivo Margan (1926–2010), Valter Rukavina (1896–1972), Alan Šustić (1965–2023), Ivo Usmiani (1953–), and Šime Vlahović (1932–1977).

The concluding texts—*Trsat and Kozala: The Final Stations of Rijeka Physicians* and *Selected Key Literature on the General History of Rijeka and the History of Its Medicine*—provide contextual and bibliographic overviews.

Proofreading and copyediting were carried out by Siniša Smiljanić of the same department at the Faculty of Medicine. Parallel to the Croatian edition, the guide includes English translations prepared by Adverbium Opatija. As expected of a guidebook, it contains extensive visual material, sourced from the Croatian State Archives, Jadran Galenic Laboratory, the Conservation Department in Rijeka, the City Museum of Rijeka (Ivo Margan collection), and the private collection of Robert Doričić. The photographs were taken by Ivan Vranjić, and the design was produced by Cipmann d.o.o. The guide's modern and visually appealing design is noteworthy, particularly for a historical publication.

The popularization of scholarly insights from the history of medicine—and from historical research more broadly—presents an inherent challenge. Beyond the need for conciseness, such endeavors risk overwhelming readers with an excessive accumulation of factual data. The guide succeeds in avoiding this common pitfall and manages to orient the narrative toward the future without remaining confined within the boundaries of the past. Across thirteen chapters, the authors lead the reader through the city of Rijeka along routes shaped by the medical history embedded in its urban fabric.

Perhaps the most sensitive aspect of the guide concerns the authors' selection of notable figures from the history of medicine to be included or excluded from the list of those most deserving for biomedical matters in this area. A comprehensive culture of memory should also incorporate other distinguished individuals who contributed to the development of the Clinical Hospital Center and the Faculty of Medicine throughout the 20th century.

The guide offers a structured overview of the history of medicine in Rijeka on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Faculty of Medicine. It presents essential historical information in a manner accessible to a general readership. Its value

lies in its scientifically informed yet popular presentation of key developments in Rijeka's medical past. The authors—already established experts in the field—provide, through this guide and in the context of the jubilee year, an important contribution to the public understanding of medical history. Public history—discourse on the past that occurs outside academic frameworks—plays a crucial role in shaping community identity. This is equally true of the history of medicine.

No previous publication has offered such a comprehensive overview of the medical history of Rijeka. By conveying and interpreting fundamental insights, complemented by photographs and biographical sketches of prominent medical figures, the authors present the city's medical heritage in a clear and engaging manner, thereby contributing to the wider dissemination of scholarly knowledge. Despite the adjectives “small” and “unpretentious” in its title, the guide represents a significant contribution to local historical-medical discourse. It may be regarded as a valuable gift from the city's oldest university constituent to all those interested in the history of medicine and in the history of Rijeka.

**Marko Medved**