

100th anniversary of the fourth International Congress of Thalassotherapy in Opatija

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100th ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF THALASSOTHERAPY IN OPATIJA

STOGODIŠNJICA ČETVRTOG MEĐUNARODNOG KONGRESA O TALASOTERAPIJI U OPATIJI

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SUMMARY

The authors of the text have been particularly interested into the organization, the procedure, the accompanying activities as well as the themes covered at 4th International Congress of Thalassotherapy in Opatija in 1908.

The Congress was organised by the then head of the thermal spa resort Professor Dr. Julius Glax. The official languages at the Congress were German, French, English, and also Italian and Croatian as the languages of the hosting country. Each lecturer had twenty minutes time to give a lecture or a co-lecture, ten minutes for papers and five for a follow-up discussion.

The participants could make use of the information centre of the Congress, in the centre of Opatija, the whole day. Unofficially, the Congress started on 27th September 1908 with the introductory evening for all the participants in Adria Club. The Congress officially began on 28th September 1908 when all the participants gathered at the theatre hall of Hotel Stephanie. The lectures were presented in the morning. In the afternoon, the participants were taken to visit some exhibitions (e.g. the medical exhibition at

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Abbazia /Opatija – the panoramic view of the Austrian Riviera, 1905.
(Ante Škrobonja Collection)

Abbazia/Opatija – panorama austrijske rivijere, 1905.
(Zbirka Ante Škrobonje)

Hotel Palace, the exhibition of the native Istrian-Dalmatian home crafts and antiques and the painting exhibition at Vila Angiolina), a short sea voyage through the bay of Kvarner. On the last day of the Congress, the participants observed the sanitary conditions in Opatija (the water supply, the sewer system, litter incinerator, and quarantine for infectious illnesses), three sanatoriums, Zander's Institute, the rehabilitating-heart paths and the Archduke Ludwig-Viktor's indoor baths. The round-Opatija tour was followed by the concluding meeting and the conclusion of the Congress.

The authors of this research have established that there are no important differences in the organization and realization of the congresses in the past and now.

Key words: *History of medicine, Thalassotherapy, Congress, Abbazia/Opatija*

The authors wanted to find out how the congresses were organized in the Austro-Hungarian Empire one hundred years ago.

One of the most important congresses in the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 20th century was 4th International Congress of Thalassotherapy (further in the text mentioned as the Congress) which was held in Abbazia (nowadays Opatija, Croatia) in 1908. The first congress was held in 1894 in Boulogne sur Mer, France, following in the unequal periods, the second one in Ostende, Belgium in 1895, and the third one in Biarritz, France in 1903 [1].

At 3rd International Congress of Thalassotherapy in Biarritz, Prof. Dr. Winternitz suggested that 4th International Congress is to be held on the Austrian Riviera in 1908. For the location of the Congress he suggested Opatija, which was known as the Austrian Nice. Prof. Dr. Winternitz was the leading balneologist and a personal friend of Prof. Dr. Julius Glax. During that time, between 1899 and 1919, Julius Glax was the headmaster of the health spa and sea resort Opatija. He was a recognized balneologist who aspired tirelessly to expand balneology and thalassotherapy [4,5].

In 1908, the Emperor Franz Joseph celebrated 60th anniversary of his reign. In the same year, Opatija celebrated 25th anniversary of being appointed the official health spa and sea resort. The authors of this article believe that the idea of hosting the Congress was accepted because of these two events.

The organizer took advantage of 60th anniversary of the reign of Franz Joseph for the request that the main patronage of the Congress was taken by a member of the Royal house of the Habsburgs. The main patron was His Imperial and Royal Highness the Archduke Rainer. The Archduke Rainer was also the curator of the Austrian Academy of Science among other things and the protector of the Museum of Arts and Industry. He did not attend the Congress, but he was represented by His Excellency the Count Orsini-Rosenberg [1,6].

Besides the main patron, the Congress had also three other patrons from the civil service. They were: Baron Dr. Richard von Bienerth, the Minister of Internal Affairs, Dr. Gustav Marchet, the Minister of Culture and Teaching, and Dr. Albert Geßmann, the Minister of Public Works. At the congress, the first two were represented by Prince Hohenlohe, the third attended in person [1].

The basis for the presentation of 4th Congress was the Proceedings of lectures *Verhandlungen des IV. Internationalen Kongresses für Thalassotherapie*, which was published in 1909.

The organization and the protocol of the Congress were meticulously defined by the Statute and the Procedure Manual. The Statute had seven articles.

Generally, the Congress was intended for scientists and general practitioners (Article 1).

The chairmanship of the Congress was constituted by the chairman, the two vice-chairmen, the numerous honorary chairmen's secretaries and the general secretary (Article 3). The official languages were German, French, English, Italian and Croatian. Papers, lectures and discussions at the Congress were not accepted, not even partially, if they had previously been published (Article 4). The registration fee was 20 francs for gentlemen and 10 francs for ladies (Article 5).

The procedure manual had ten articles, where the timetables and the activity places of the Congress were listed (Article 1). The time limits of the essays, co-essays, lectures and discussions were determined (Article 6). The procedure manual anticipated that the Congress started on 28th September at the theatre hall of the Hotel Stefanie (nowadays the Hotel Imperial) at 8 am (Article 10). The Congress took place every morning from 8 am to 12 am (Article 3) The information centre was based in the arcades of the Archduke Ludwig-Viktor's indoor baths (Article 9). The exact deadlines for the submission of the summaries and the papers (Article 4) were specified in the procedure manual together with the exact instructions to whom they should be submitted (Article 4 and Article 8).

Equally, it was particularly specified when and to who should the participants apply for a discussion (Article 5) [1].

At the time of the Congress in Opatija, the honorary committee, the organization committee and the honorary chairmanship were in full function.

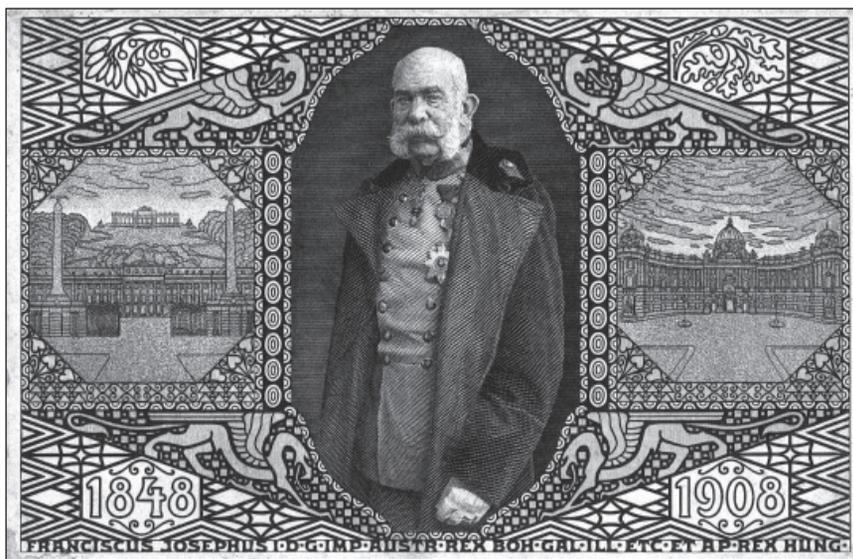
In the honorary chairmanship, there were the representatives from the government, some important companies and press. So there were: Prince Konrad zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, the Imperial Royal Governor from Trieste, as the chairman, Dr. Ludwig Rizzi, the General Governor of the Province of Istria, Baron Arthur von Schmidt-Zabierow, the Prefect of the district Volosko, Dr. Andreas Stanger and Ivan Bačić, the mayors of Opatija and Veprinac, the general managers of the Southern railroad, the steam navigation company Adria and Austrian Lloyds, some representatives of the international company of the berths and steam navigation company Ungaro-Croata, the chief editor of *Fremden Blat Newspaper* and some representatives of the newspapers *Neue Freie Presse* and also from the German Austrian society of writers. This committee was also joined by two important persons of public life in Opatija, Baronesse Stefanie Rubido-Zichy and an artist Stefanie Glax, the daughter of Prof. Glax [1].

The organization committee had 29 members who were the doctors from Opatija. Prof. Julius Glax was the president of the committee. The

secretary was Dr. J. Kurz, to whom the Congress participants submitted their lectures in written form for later publication. The treasurer was Dr. Joseph Knöpfelmacher [1].

The honorary committee consisted of the world famous doctors from some European countries. Prof. Albert Robin from Paris, Sir Hermann Weber from London, Prof. Ernest Ludwig, Dr. Daimer and Prof. Wilhelm Winternitz were from Vienna, Prof. Kirchner and Prof. Ernest von Leyden from Berlin. The chairman of the honorary committee was Prof. Ernest von Leyden [1].

In some European countries, such as Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Greece, Holland, Italy, Hungary, Germany, Norway, Romania, Russia, Sweden and Croatia the state committees were organized. They had various numbers of members, ranging from 1 to 24. Every committee had a chairman or an honorary chairman, some had secretaries' clerks and some honorary members. It hasn't been possible to establish their role and meaning from the collection of scientific papers from the Congress. Some of the state committees' members were also the participants of the Congress [1].



The jubilee postcard printed at 60th anniversary of Emperor Franz Joseph's reign.
(Family archive Glax – Fischinger)

Jubilarna razglednica u povodu 60-godišnjice vladanja cara Franje Josipa
(obiteljski arhiv Glax-Fischinger)

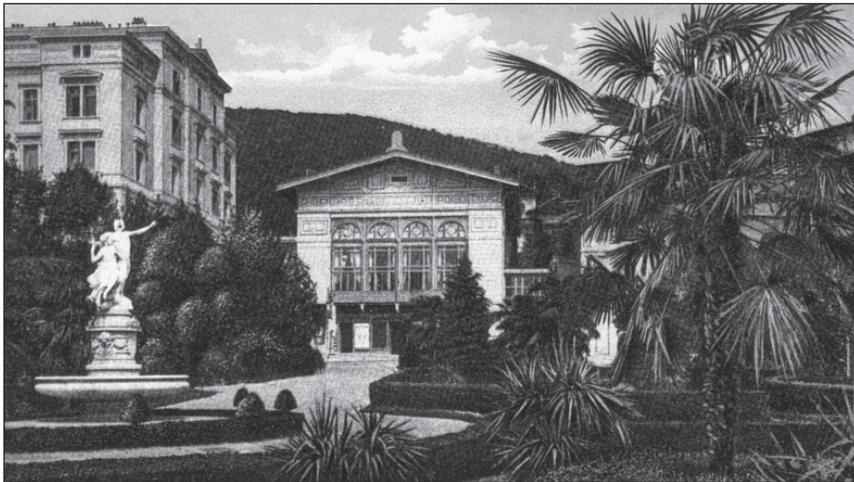


The postcard presenting the climate health and spa resort in Abbazia / Opatija, around 1911. (Family archive Glax – Fischinger)

Razglednica klimatskog lječilišta i kupališta Abbazia/Opatija oko 1911. (obiteljski arhiv Glax-Fischinger)

The Congress had three hundred and five (305) registered participants, but from the opening speeches we were able to establish that not every registered participant was also present at the Congress. Such examples were Professor Robin (Paris), one of the most respected men in the field of thalassotherapy, and the Privy Councillor Winternitz, who was detained in the *last hour*. They were represented by Dr. Baudouin and Dr. Ullmann, the Assistant Professor. The participants of the Congress paid special tribute to the memory of the two Russian physicians Prince Tarchanoff and Prof. von Poehl, who had died unexpectedly shortly before the beginning of the Congress [1].

The participants of the congress were mostly physicians of different academic levels by their primary education, and many of them were accompanied by their partners or daughters. The main organizer, Prof. Glax, was accompanied by his wife Hermina. Altogether there were forty-eight (48) female participants who attended the lectures given at the



The once Hotel Stefani, nowadays Hotel Imperial and the theatre, 1905.
(Family archive Glax – Fischinger)

Nekadašnji hotel Stefani (današnji hotel Imperial) i teatar, 1905.
(obiteljski arhiv Glax-Fischinger)

Congress with admiration and interest [3]. Among the female participants of the Congress, there was only one female physician. That was Dr. Franziska Fuchs from Lemberg (nowadays Lvov), even though the government of the Austro-Hungarian Empire had allowed women to study medicine since 1900 [1,7].

Among the participants of the Congress, there were chemists, including the representatives of today's pharmaceutical company Bayer, which was then still a family business. The participants were also representatives of the food industry, such as Maggi and Nestle. Many bath resorts from Europe had sent their representatives to the Congress [1].

At the Congress, there were journalists from the newspapers *Fremden Blatt*, *Neue Freie Presse*, *Oesterreichisches Illustriertes Journal* and *Wiener Medizinische Wochenschrift*. The most accurate reporting was done by the newspaper *Fremden Blatt* in numbers 267-271, in the daily events section. *Wiener Medizinische Wochenschrift* published a short notice about the Congress in its 40th issue, and in the issue 44, a longer report followed, including the announcement of the publication for all the papers delivered by the invited Professors, in the following issues. *Oesterreichisches Illustriertes Journal* wrote in its 1136th edition, dated 1st October 1908,

that Opatija with hosting the Congress officially placed itself among the world's famous health spas [1,8-12,15].

Unofficially, the Congress commenced with the reception in the Adria Club on Sunday, 27th September, at 9 o'clock in the evening. It was held by the Organization committee and the Adria Club. The gypsy band played until midnight. Opatija was lit by arc lights for the first time that night [16].

The official beginning of the Congress was on Monday at 8 am in the then theatre hall of Hotel Stephanie (nowadays Hotel Imperial). With the special address of all the extinguished participants, Prof. Glax, on behalf the organization committee, the association of the physicians of Opatija and the Health spa commission, welcomed the participants of the Congress. In the speech, he expressed his gratitude to Dr. Rizzi, the General Governor of the Province of Istria, and to the District province itself, for all the moral and material help with the execution of the Congress. He also expresses thanks to the representatives of the press and the numerous members of various medical associations. A special greeting was dedicated to Dr. Kosić, the representative of the Association of the Croatian Physicians [1].

Speeches from His Excellency Count Rosenberg-Orsini, Minister His Excellency Dr. Geßmann, His Royal Highness the Governor Prince Hohenlohe, Dr. Rizzi, the General Governor of the Province of Istria, the Privy Councillor Dr. Ernest Ludwig (Vienna), Dr. Georges Baudouin (Paris), the Assistant Professor Dr. Karl Ulmann (Vienna) and Dr. M. J. Kranzfeld (from the Association of Physicians of Odessa) followed [1].

After the welcoming speeches, a permanent working committee of the Congress in 1908 was elected. It had been suggested by Dr. Ernest Ludwig, the Privy Councillor. The committee had the following members:

President:

Prof. Glax, the Governmental Councillor, (Abbazia)

The vice-presidents:

Dr. Graeffner, the Health Councillor, (Berlin),

Dr. Cuomo (Capri),

Dr. Lindemann (Zoppot),

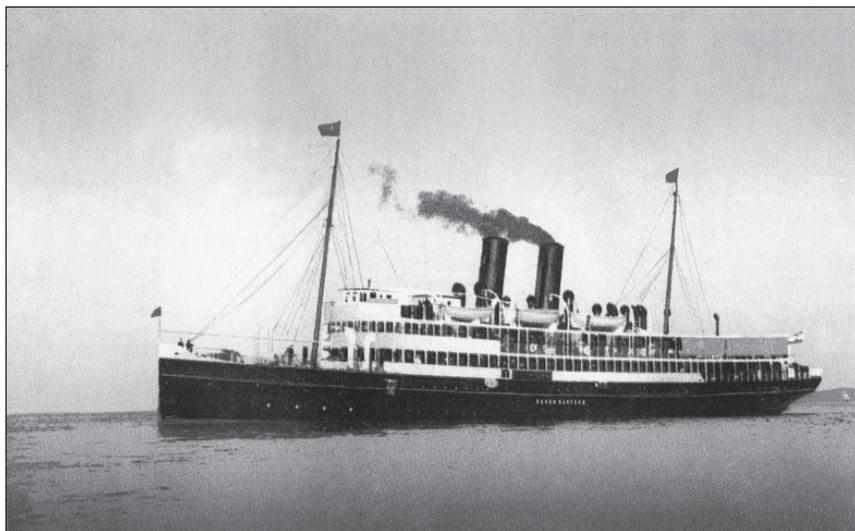
Dr. Gmelin (Föhr),

Dr. Margulies (Kolberg),

The Assistant Professor Fodor, the Royal Councillor,

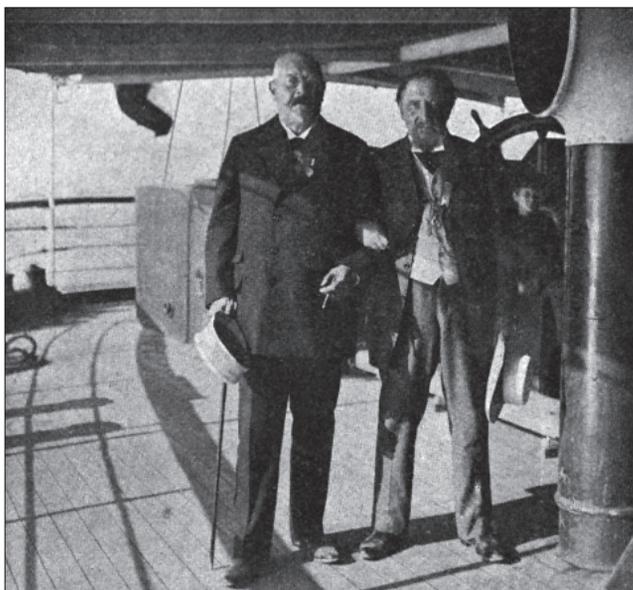
(Abbazia),
The Chief Secretary: Dr. Kurz (Abbazia),
The Secretary: Dr. Franc Tripold, the Royal Councillor,
(Abbazia),
Dr. Loew (Abbazia)
The Treasurer: Dr. Knöpfelmacher (Abbazia) [1].

After the elections of the presidency, the introduction speech by Professor Glax, the chairman, followed. He presented the history of the thalassotherapy and the previous congresses. He emphasized the meaning of the Congress for Opatija, which was honored by such a numerous visit from the most important representatives of the science. Opatija marked its 25th anniversary of being a health and sea resort with a commemorative plaque dedicated to Professor Billroth opening a tram line from Matulji (train station) through Volosko and Opatija to Lovran, a new town hall building in Volosko and the beginning of the building of the new road which would reroute the car traffic past Opatija [17]. That year, 1908, was not a festive year just for Opatija but, because of the 60th anniversary of the reign of the beloved Emperor, it was a festive year for the whole



The steamboat *Baron Gautsch*, 1908.
(*Courtesy of Mitja Lamut taken from the book Potniške ladje na razglednicah*)

Parobrod Baron Gautsch, 1908.
(S dopuštanjem autora iz knjige *Potniške ladje na razglednicah*)



Prof. Glax and Prof. von Leyden on the steamboat *Baron Gautsch*. *Abbazia Guide*, 1909. (*Family archive Glax – Fischinger*)

Prof. Glax i prof. von Leyden na parobrodu Baron Gautsch. *Vodič po Opatiji*, 1909 (obiteljski arhiv Glax-Fischinger)

Austria. As the Chairman suggested, the participants of the Congress stood up and with a three time cheers honored the high jubilee of the Emperor's reign [1].

A lecture of the invited speaker, Dr. Häberlin (Wyk-Föhr), followed. The co-speaker Dr. Barbier (Paris) did not attend the Congress, he had just sent in his paper. In the discussion that followed, ten physicians participated. Until 12 am, four more lectures followed, and some of them were followed by the discussion [3].

In the afternoon, the activities began at 2 pm. Firstly, the participants attended the opening of the exhibition of some medical appliances and pharmaceutical remedies at Hotel Palace. The exhibitors came from Austria, Germany and France. The most respected of them were Dr. Ullmann (Vienna) and Dr. Nussbaum (Opatija) [17]. Later on, the participants visited the exhibition of Istrian-Dalmatian home crafts and antiques and the painting exhibition by Baron Ransonnet, Miss Leontine Litrow, Miss Anne Lynker and Miss Stefanie Glax. All of the mentioned artists lived and worked in Opatija. The exhibits were prepared by Baroness Stefanie Rubido-Zichy and Stefanie Glax [17,18].

On the second day, the invited speakers, Dr. Lavergne and Dr. Gmelin, presented their papers; these were followed by a co-lecture by Dr. Sadoveanu, then five more lectures and some discussions followed [3].

In the afternoon (from 1 pm to 7 pm), the participants of the Congress had an excursion through the bay of Kvarner by the ship named Baron Gauth. The steamboat was the pride of the Austro-Hungarian navy and one of the most modern passenger lines on the Adriatic. The steam engines were capable of producing 4600 horse power [20]. The Lloyd company donated the voyage by the luxury steamship as well as the lunch and live music on board (*Stadtkapelle Volosko*). The most enthusiastic danced to the sound of waltzes [10].

On the third day, the invited speakers were Dr. Henning and Prof. Glax. The co-lecturer was Dr. Luisada. The fourteen other lectures followed with a few discussions [3]. Dr. Ulman demonstrated sunlamp for treatment of skin diseases, infections of nasal mucous and genital organs, especially of tuberculosis origin [2].

In the afternoon, the participants took a tour of Opatija in groups. They were led by Dr. Fabianic in Dr. Coporcich. The tour included the sanitary conditions in Opatija (water supply, the sewer system, litter incinerator, quarantine for infectious illnesses), sanatoriums of physicians Szegö, Mahler and Schalk, Zander Institute, the Archduke Ludwig-Viktor indoor baths and the rehabilitations paths for patients with heart disease [3]. Zander Institute was the predecessor of the present fitness and gym centres [19].

At 5 pm, there were the evaluation and the concluding session of the Congress. At this particular session, it was confirmed that the 5th Congress of Thalassotherapy would take place on the Baltic in 1911. The location was not yet determined. Two cities offered their hospitality: Kolberg (nowadays Kolobrzeg) and Zoppot (nowadays Sopot). They agreed on the six health topics for the next congress [3].

They also confirmed the suggestion by Dr. Casse (Bruxelles) about the forming a permanent international committee which would be in charge of organizing the next congress and evaluating the papers. The suggested and elected members were: Dr. Casse (Bruxelles), Dr. Baudouin (Paris), Dr. Houzel (Boulogne sur Mer), Prof. Glax (Abbazia), Privy Councillor Röchling (Misdroy), Dr. Cuomo (Capri), Dr. Nicolas (Westerland-Sylt), Dr. Kranzfeld (Odessa) and Dr. Parkes Weber (London) [3].

After the concluding speech of Prof. Glax, His Royal Excellency Privy Councillor von Leyden thanked his dear friend Prof. Glax for the invitation to the Congress and an exceptionally friendly reception. He emphasized that although he himself had not been a thalassotherapist, he concurred with everything being said and that undoubtedly, the excellent weather and the

fact that Opatija was one of the finest seaside health resorts contributed to the success of the Congress. The lectures and discussions were the essence of the Congress. All could not yet be explored; the most important thing was to discuss the problems. In the end, the acknowledgment to the highly honored chairman for the excellent guided Congress followed [3].

Dr. Margulies expressed his gratitude, on the behalf of the participants, to the Organizing committee for all their effort and labour [3].

The Congress proceeding was published in 1909. On the behalf of the 4th International Congress of Thalassotherapy in Opatija, it was published by Dr. J. Glax, the Governmental Concillor, Emeritus and the chairman of the Congress, and by Dr. J. Kurz, the General Secretary of the Congress. Dr. Franz Tripold, secretary, meticulously reported about the daily events in the scientific part of the Congress.

We found the information on the social events in the daily newspapers *Fremden Blatt*, *Neue Freie Presse* and *Illustriertes Österreichisches Journal*, the weekly newspapers *Wiener Medizinische Wochenschrift* and the Opatija Guide for 1909. In this guide, a photography from the Congress was published. Social engagements were held every evening: a gala banquet, a dance, a garden party and the so-called Venetian night.

Five theme questions were considered at the 4th International Congress of Thalassotherapy in 1908.

- I. Indications and contraindications for sea bath treatment of chlorosis and anemia. Presenters: Dr. Barbier (Paris) and Dr. Häberlin (Wyk).
- II. Indications and contraindications for sea bath treatment of women's disease. Presenters: Dr. Lavergne (Biarritz) and Dr. Sadoveanu (Constanza).
- III. Dietary and sanitary measures during thalassotherapy.
Presenter: Dr. Karl Gmelin (Föhr).
- IV. Comparative analysis of water from various seas, their aerosols and therapeutic success.
Presenter: Dr. Henning (Königsberg / nowadays Kaliningrad).
Registered discussion: Dr. E. Sterian (Bukarest).
- V. Different sea climates and conditions of their effect.
Presenters: Prof. Julius Glax (Abbazia) and Dr. Ezio Luisada (Viareggio).
Registered discussion: Dr. Nicolas (Westerland-Sylt) [1].



The honorary diploma of 4th International Congress of Thalassotherapy awarded to Dr. Stefan Isor Stein, the owner of Zander Institute.
(*Thalassotherapie Opatija*)

Spomen-diploma IV. internacionalnog kongresa talasoterapije, dodijeljena dr. Stefanu Isoru Steinu, vlasniku Zander Instituta (Thalassotherapie Opatija)

Although there were five official languages used at the Congress, most speakers gave their lectures in German and French. The participants from Italy renounced their right to speak in their native language. The lecture of Dr. Kosić from Kraljevica was published in German, while the same lecture was published in January 1909 in *Liječnički vjestnik (sječanj/januar 1909)* in Croatian [21,3].

In 2009, nearly all the great names of the doctors who attended the 4th International Congress of Thalassotherapy in Opatija are forgotten. Only a few of them can be found mentioned in different web-side documents (e.g. Glax, Gmelin, von Leyden, Winternitz, Zander), while the information on the 4th International Congress of Thalassotherapy in 1908 in Opatija can not be found at all.

In Opatija, only a replica of the honorary diploma, which is kept in the reception hall of Talasoterapija (former Vila Quitta) reminds the visitors of that renowned international scientific meeting. The honorary diploma is in possession of M. Sc. Marije Puharič-Harašlić, M.D. Originally, the Congress awarded it to the owner of the Zander Institute, Dr. Isor Stein.

Considering the question about the organization of the Congress one hundred years ago, we came to certain conclusions:

1. The patronage existed already in those past days. Even nowadays, the organizers ask an important person for the patronage.
2. In comparison with the modern congresses, the Congress in Opatija had a much bigger organizing committee.
3. Today, there can be found no valid equivalents to the past state committees whose members were also physicians.
4. The Congress in Opatija one hundred years ago was already a true international congress, with participants from nearly all European states (except Portugal and Spain).
5. All scientific themes were, as they are nowadays, strictly defined. All topics were from the field of balneo-thalasso therapy. Even free topics were bound to this field. Nowadays, the free topics are not necessarily bound to the theme of the congresses.
6. It is understandable that the Congress (in 1908) did not have any active female participants, the only female physician, Dr. Franziska Fuchs (Lvov/Lemberg), attended the Congress as a passive participant.
7. It is interesting that even then the pharmaceutical industry was involved, the same as it is today.
8. Even though many speakers were accompanied by female companions (wives, daughters; there were forty-eight of them altogether), there was no special programme organized for them. Nowadays, the organizers usually prepare the accompanying ladies' programme. The female companions attended the scientific part of the Congress. The social part was attended by everybody.
9. The visit of the exhibition of the pharmaceutical remedies and the medical appliances was included into the programme of the Congress, while nowadays, it is considered an accompanying activity of the congress.

10. The cultural programme and the sightseeing tour were organized in the same way as they are today.
11. We have not been able to find out whether the lectures were read or spoken from memory, or if the speakers used any graphic demonstrations of their findings (e.g. writing on boards, drawing the graphs, etc.).
12. The Congress proceeding of the lectures was published one year after the Congress, while nowadays the participants get it at the start of a congress.

The authors of this research have found out that there are not any important differences between the organization of the medical congresses in the past and now.

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SAŽETAK

Autore članaka zanimali su organizacija, izvedba, popratne aktivnosti i teme predavanja na 4. međunarodnom kongresu talasoterapije u Opatiji 1908.

Kongres je organizirao tadašnji ravnatelj lječilišta prof. dr. Julis Glax. Službeni jezici kongresa bili su njemački, francuski, engleski te talijanski i hrvatski kao jezici pokrajine – domaćina kongresa. Predavači su imali na raspolaganju 20 minuta za referate i koreferate, 10 minuta za predavanje i 5 minuta za diskusiju.

Informacijsko središte kongresa u središtu Opatije bilo je sudionicima na raspolaganju cijeli dan. Neslužbeno je kongres s radom započeo 27. rujna 1908. pozdravnom večerom u Adria klubu. Službeno otvorenje Kongresa bilo je 28. rujna 1908. u 8 sati u kazališnoj dvorani hotela Stephanie. Prijepodne su se održavala predavanja. Poslijepodne su sudionicima pripremili razgledavanje izložbi (hotel Palace: Medicinska izložba, Vila Angiolina: Istarsko-dalmatinska izložba i Izložba slika) te izlet brodom po Kvarnerskom zaljevu. Posljednjeg dana kongresa sudionici su upoznati s higijensko-sanitarnim uređenjem Opatije (vodovod, kanalizacija, spalionica otpada, karantena za zarazne bolesti), posjetili su neke sanatorije, Zander Instiut, rehabilitacijske staze za srčane bolesnike i zatvoreno kupalište nadvojvode Ludwig-Viktora. Nakon razgledavanja Opatije, slijedila je zaključna sjednica te zatvaranje kongresa.

Iz našeg istraživanja proizlazi da ne postoji bitna razlika u organizaciji i izvedbi medicinskih kongresa prije stotinu godina i danas.

Ključne riječi: povijest medicine, talasoterapija, kongres, Opatija/Abbazia