

# The fiftieth anniversary of the Croatian scientific society for the history of health culture

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## THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CROATIAN SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY FOR THE HISTORY OF HEALTH CULTURE

### PEDESETA OBLJETNICA DJELOVANJA HRVATSKOGA ZNANSTVENOG DRUŠTVA ZA POVIJEST ZDRAVSTVENE KULTURE

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#### SUMMARY

*This paper presents the impressive activity of the Croatian Society for the History of Health Culture on the occasion of the half-century anniversary. The short overall historical review of the Society's history is given, and three particularly important projects are highlighted: the science conventions "Rijeka and its Citizens in Medical History" ("Rijeka i Riječani u medicinskoj povjesnici"), the scientific journal AMHA – Acta medico-historica Adriatica, and the special section called "In honour of Asclepius and Orpheus" ("Asklepiju i orfeju u čast").*

**Keywords:** *the history of medicine, the Croatian Society for the History of Health Culture, science convention, scientific journal, links between music and medicine.*

#### INTRODUCTION

Fifty years of continuous work of the Croatian Scientific Society for the History of Health Culture was promoted by the gala academia on December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016, celebrating the half-century jubilee with the adequate ceremonial program. At the beginning, the President of the Society, Ante Škrobonja,

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received a Diploma of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Rijeka for the exceptional overall professional and scientific contribution to the research of the history of medicine across the region (given by the dean of the same Faculty), and a Diploma of the Honorary Member of Slovenian Scientific Society for the History of Health Culture (given by the president of the same society). A historical review of the Society's half century activity, given by the actual President, Ante Škrobonja, follows. An overall review and the evaluation of the Society's most important project – scientific journal *AMHA – Acta medico-historica Adriatica* is given by the actual editor in chief, Igor Eterović. The festive atmosphere was complete with the music performance of the members of Society's Section called "In honour of Asclepius and Orpheus".

A special part of the journal's supplement devoted to this high anniversary was the final part, celebrating this impressive half-century work of the Society. Since all contributions in the supplement were published in Croatian, this Editorial is primarily aimed to inform the wider audience about the impressive activity of the Society that "gathers historians, health and public workers, workers in the culture, and associations that want to support and develop historical and cultural heritage of medicine. With its activities, the Society enhances scientific and research work in the field of the history of medicine and complementary sciences, especially humanities; popularization of medico-historical science, cultural heritage of Croatian medical history, organization of conferences, lectures and professional excursions, publishing and collaboration with other similar associations and societies from the home country and abroad."<sup>1</sup>

## HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

All started when a group of intellectuals, predominantly lecturers and professors from the Faculty of Medicine, decided to formally acknowledge their informal gatherings and love towards the history of medicine and complementary topics. On the proposal of the Professor Levental, finally on May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1966, the initiative committee for the foundation of a new society was formed, and it was decided to launch a regional branch of the already existed Yugoslavian Scientific Society for the History of Health Culture. The Statute of the new society was also adopted on that day. From an early

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<sup>1</sup> Doričić, Robert, „Svečana akademija u povodu 50. obljetnice utemeljenja Hrvatskoga znanstvenoga društva za povijest zdravstvene kulture“, *AMHA – Acta medico-historica Adriatica*, 2017, Suppl. 1, p. 9.

period of the Society, an unexpectedly high response of intellectuals from various disciplines should be highlighted, and one specific interdisciplinary approach to the history of medicine was initiated from the start. There were plenty of topical meetings, professional excursions, participations at the domestic and international scientific conferences, publications of valuable contributions to the local and national history of medicine. Two annual conferences of the Yugoslavian Society, organized by the Croatian branch, should be pointed out: the first held in Crikvenica in 1968 and the second in Poreč in 1976. Then, a successful international scientific meeting was organized in Crikvenica in 1990 and one scientific colloquia in Rijeka in 1991. The activity of the Society was also publicly recognized. The best evidence is the Society's reception of the Annual award of the City of Rijeka in 1969.

After the independence of Croatia in 1991, the Society continues its work under the name The Croatian Scientific Society for the History of Health Culture with its seat in Rijeka. The Society very soon successfully became a part of the International Society for the History of Medicine. In the 50 years of the Society's existence, more than 250 professional and scientific meetings and conferences were held in Rijeka and other Croatian cities under its organization. Additionally, many professional-scientific trips to neighboring countries were organized.

Three original activities are especially important. First, the science convention with international participation "Rijeka and Its Citizens in Medical History", where, since 2001, have been regularly presented topics from Croatia and other regions. Second, the international journal *AMHA – Acta medico-historica Adriatica*, which has been published with two issues per year since 2003. It should be stressed that in 2005, the accompanying AMHA Book Series was launched – a series of monographs devoted to the most important medical historians, scientific conferences dedicated to individual medical laureates, and similar subjects. Third, an informal group of medical students, who under the motto "In honour of Asclepius and Orpheus" strive to affirm the links between medicine and art, was organized in 2006.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This short historical sketch is based on a larger overview given in Škrobonja, Ante – Salopek, Igor, „U prigodi pedesete obljetnice djelovanja Znanstvenog društva za povijest zdravstvene kulture“, *AMHA – Acta medico-historica Adriatica*, 2017, Suppl. 1, pp. 11–18.

## SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE “RIJEKA AND ITS CITIZENS IN MEDICAL HISTORY”

One of the most important activities of the Society is scientific conference “Rijeka i Riječani u medicinskoj povjesnici” [“Rijeka and Its Citizens in Medical History”]. The major topic is highlighted in the title of the conferences, but all other topics about the history of medicine, primarily from wider region have been continuously presented at the conferences.

The first conference was organized in October 2000, and with only one break in 2015, a total of 16 conferences have been held till this day. Over the years, the conference has had various sponsors, but in the several last years a stronger bond with the Faculty of Medicine of Rijeka University, the City of Rijeka and the Primorsko-goranska County has been evident.

A total of 315 presentations were held by 514 authors at 16 conferences. The authors were coming from different parts of Croatia, but also from the wider region of Central and Southeast Europe. Many of those conferences were additionally enriched with professional excursions for all participants.

The conference has been, without any doubt, one of the longest continually organized activity of the Society, and it has been the only traditional conference in the history of medicine in Croatia. The conference has played a historical role not only in the national and regional scope by gathering many different profiles of scientists and professionals exploring together various issues of the history of medicine, but also made an international impact by providing a firm basis for launching a distinct scientific journal in the history of medicine – AMHA.<sup>3</sup>

## SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL AMHA – ACTA MEDICO-HISTORICA ADRIATICA

The first 14 years of publication of the scientific journal AMHA – *Acta medico-historica Adriatica* (2003–2016) have been quite impressive. This journal has undoubtedly become and remained the central activity of the

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<sup>3</sup> Much more about the conference see in: Eterović, Igor, „Science convention „Rijeka and Its Citizens in Medical History“; 2000–2009 – history of medicine as a component of scientific visibility“, *AMHA – Acta medicohistorica Adriatica*, 2011; 9(1), pp. 9–18; Eterović, Igor (ur.), *Znanstveni skup Rijeka i Riječani u medicinskoj povjesnici 2000.-2009: Zbornik sažetaka izlaganja s kazalom imena i uodnom studijom*, Biblioteka AMHA, vol. 8, HZDPZK, 2011.; Doričić, Robert – Eterović, Igor, „Znanstveni skupovi Rijeka i Riječani u medicinskoj povjesnici 2000.–2016.“, *AMHA – Acta medico-historica Adriatica*, 2017, Suppl. 1, pp. 19-24.

Croatian Scientific Society for the History of Health Culture, which has rapidly become a globally esteemed journal of the history of medicine.

The beginnings of publishing the journal are connected to scientific meeting “Rijeka and Its Citizens in Medical History”. After the third conference, the critical mass of researchers and important connections were established, so the time came to try to launch a new journal.

A respectable editorial and advisory board were formed and strategic line of the journal established, the most transparently enclosed in the words of Editor-In-Chief on the first pages of the journal in the “Greetings to Reader”:

*In this way, we stress that we are primarily interested in:*

- *Medical history of the nations, geographically and historically belonging to the Adriatic and Central-European cultural tradition;*
- *Medical-historical relations among those nations and the traces they have left in other cultures;*
- *Other topics related to the multicultural context of the Adriatic region.*

*Beside these topics, also welcomed are contributions on medical history from other parts of the world.<sup>4</sup>*

Without linking with any geographical or historical framework, the journal has flourished. The variety of topics and the quality of prepared materials with all necessary scientific methodology (peer-reviews, proof reading, working on indexation and visibility etc.) resulted in profiling into distinguished international journal and determined its fast development in later years.

Apart from the first year, when a third co-publisher was included, all published issues have been printed by the Croatian Scientific Society for the History of Medicine as the publisher and the Faculty of Medicine of Rijeka University as a co-publisher. The sponsors varied through years, but the significance and the quality of the journal were recognized very early, therefore, all volumes were helped at least in some amount from the Croatian Ministry of Science, and over the past four years there was a constant support from the Rijeka’s Faculty of Medicine, apart from other important sponsors.

During the 14 years of AMHA (2003–2016) some impressive numbers are worth mentioning: 256 scientific articles were published on 3749 pages. Among them there were 83 original scientific articles, 17 preliminary

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<sup>4</sup> Škrobonja, Ante, [“Greetings to Reader”], AMHA – *Acta medico-historica Adriatica*, 2003; 1(1), p. 9.

communications and 156 review scientific articles. The total number of printed pages is 4738.

The evidence of international recognition is manifested by journal's indexation in relevant scientific journal bases. AMHA has been indexed in SCOPUS since 2006, in EBSCO since 2007, in MEDLINE since 2008, and in Web of Science Core Collection (ESCI) since 2015. It reached the third quartile (Q<sub>3</sub>) in 2012, and with one year break (in 2014) is still in Q<sub>3</sub>. These are quite great accomplishments for a journal dealing with the topics about the history of medicine.

AMHA is definitely the most important project of the Society, but it is also, one of the projects the Faculty of Medicine is especially proud of as a co-publisher. As a gathering place for researchers in the Adriatic and its surrounding areas, it has become a true "brand" of the City of Rijeka, the Faculty of Medicine and the national academia of medical historians, not only in the regional scope, but also internationally distinct and recognized.<sup>5</sup>

### SECTION "IN HONOUR OF ASCLEPIUS AND ORPHEUS"

Under the aegis of the Society, which is naturally linked with the Faculty of Medicine (it has its seat at the Faculty, professors of the Faculty were the most active members etc.), the students from the Rijeka's Faculty of Medicine founded an informal group named „In honour of Asclepius and Orpheus“ in 2006. The group organized many musical activities (concerts, musical recitals and events), among which two must be highlighted. First activity is the traditional humanitarian annual concert of Croatian medical students, a project started in 2009, initiated as a humanitarian activity for gathering funds for people with special needs. Eight concerts were organized with participation of the students from Zagreb, Osijek, Split, Ljubljana, and Rijeka.

The second is the European Medical Students Orchestra and Choir project. This project started in 1993, and the Section won the organization of 2012 meeting, when the Faculty of Medicine, University of Rijeka hosted this gathering of students on the European level. The program was held in Zagreb, Rijeka and Rab.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> For more elaborate analysis see: Eterović, Igor „Časopis AMHA – Acta medico-historica Adriatica: 14 godina strpljivoga rada na znanstvenoj valorizaciji povijesti medicine“, *AMHA – Acta medico-historica Adriatica*, 2017, Suppl. 1, pp. 25–36.

<sup>6</sup> More about the Section see in: Nadarević, Tin – Nadarević Štefanac, Vesna, „Asklepiju i Orfeju u čast – 10 godina aktivnosti na popularizaciji veza medicine i glazbe“, *AMHA – Acta medico-historica Adriatica*, 2017, Suppl. 1, pp. 37–44.

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## SAŽETAK

*Ovaj rad predstavlja dojmljivu aktivnost Hrvatskoga znanstvenog društva za povijest zdravstvene kulture u povodu pedesete obljetnice njegova djelovanja. Dan je kratak povijesni pregled Društva, a posebno su istaknuta tri projekta: znanstveni skup Rijeka i Riječani u medicinskoj povijesnici, znanstveni časopis AMHA – Acta medico-historico Adriatica i posebna sekcija nazvana Asklepiju i Orfeju u čast.*

**Ključne riječi:** *povijest medicine; Hrvatsko znanstveno društvo za povijest zdravstvene kulture; znanstveni skup; znanstveni časopis; glazbeno-medicinske poveznice.*