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## THE PLACE OF DR. JURAJ CATTI IN WORLD MEDICINE

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**SUMMARY** *Dr. Catti, a physician from Rijeka and an excellent internist, as well as the founder of otorhinolaryngology in Rijeka and Yugoslavia, is still waiting for a scientific evaluation of his work. Only a few articles have been written about his work. On the basis of new researches, the authors try to fill some gaps in Dr. Catti's biography and to assess Dr. Catti's contribution to the development of otorhinolaryngology. From his application for a post in the hospital Sveti Duh (The Holy Ghost) we can learn that already as a student in Vienna he worked on epidemiology with Professor Drasche. Later, he was appointed to the General Hospital, and after that he worked as Professor Schroter's assistant at the clinic for lung and throat diseases. He continued his professional training on his return to Rijeka and remained one of the mainstays in the hospital in Rijeka. He carried on many researches and published a series of works in local and international journals. His instrument for removing nasopharyngeal vegetation is one of his most interesting works. In comparison with similar instruments, we may notice his originality. He is aware that working without the control of the eye, it is possible to damage the Eustachian tube. His instrument is quite different from Gottstein's or Backmen's adenotome. It is a new and original instrument. The authors succeeded in finding the drawing of the instrument, but the original has probably been lost. Concerning historical development of adenotomy, we may notice that Luschka described vegetation in 1868, and Meyre described the first experiences with adenotomies through the nose in 1873. Catti described adenotomies through the mouth and under the control of the eye in 1879. This complicated procedure, which required great skill, was naturally followed by instruments which made it possible to work faster. Those who perform indirectoscopic examination of the nasopharynx, are aware of the consequences of routine adenotomies. That is the main reason why we are returning today to Catti's methods, i.e. to adenotomies under the control of mirrors. Dr. Catti understood the importance of the most modern helping devices – mirrors for indirectoscopy. Although he published the results of his work, his contemporaries did not understand him correctly. The authors, by pointing to neglected sources in literature, are trying to prove that Dr. Catti should have an important place in the history of world medicine.*

### PROLOGUE

The contribution of Yugoslav physicians to medical science and practice is bigger than known, certainly larger than is acknowledged in books and manuals of medical history. In confrontation with some West European nations, our contribution seems to be modest, but having in mind the circumstances in which our physicians worked, we have to be proud of them. We have to take into account

that most medical history has been written by West European or North American authors, who seem to neglect Yugoslav physicians probably due to the fact that they worked outside great scientific centers.

A typical example is Lazarević's description of pathognomonic signs of ischialgia, which has unfortunately entered medical practice as Lassegue sign. We have a lot of similar cases of plagiarism. In such situations it is very hard to be objective, so we can understand both the foreign



Figure 1 Municipal tower in the city of Rijeka. On the right side is chemist's Catti.  
Slika 1 Gradski toranj u Rijeci. Desno ljekarna obitelji Catti.



Figure 2 Dr. J. Catti (1849-1923)

Slika 2 Dr. J. Catti (1849-1923)

historians and their partiality and the excessive affectivity of our authors.

Among physicians who still wait to be scientifically evaluated, is Rijeka's physician Dr. Juraj Catti (1849-1923), skillful internist, but also initiator of otorhinolaryngology in Rijeka and on the territory of nowadays Yugoslavia. Some short pieces, like Mašek's necrology in *Liječnički vjesnik*,<sup>1</sup> have been written about his life and work; Šercer mentions him in *Otorinolaringologija*, and Grmek presents him in *Medicinska enciklopedija*<sup>3</sup> and Croatian medical bibliography.<sup>4</sup> In reviews of Rijeka's medical development in the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, some Rijeka's medical historians give him great credit (Korin,<sup>5,6,7</sup> Vrbanić<sup>6,7</sup> and Matejčić<sup>8,9</sup>). Majer and Skopec mention Catti in *History of Otorhinolaryngology in Austria*.<sup>10</sup>

The common characteristic of those works is that they are too short or partial, or too general. Mašek and Šercer as otorhinolaryngologists and Dr. Catti's pupils describe his work in the proper manner, but they neglect his private biography. They cannot foresee the development of profession that changes the traditional point of view and recognizes once misunderstood discoveries.

#### PURPOSE AND METHOD OF WORK

We decided to research further with the intention of completing Catti's biography and considering his role and contribution in the development of otorhinolaryngology in

our country and in world relations, all from nowadays point of view.

In the first part of the research we analysed all literature about Catti and his published works. To complete his biography, we consulted the registry offices of Rijeka, his birthplace, and Begunje, his deathplace. Most of the material was found in the Historijski arhiv in Rijeka. Information about his studies was found in the archives of Rijeka's<sup>11</sup> High gymnasium from 1862. We took valuable information from a little book that Catti gave to the ORL clinic of the Medical Faculty of University of Zagreb. Fotocopies of his works published in *Monatschrift für Ohrenheilkunde* No. 2 from 1879<sup>12</sup> were obtained in the Zürich University library. We had no success with interviews of elder people who had met Catti. The only heir, also physician, refused collaboration, so we were deprived of some probably valuable information.

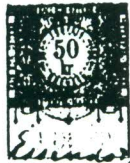
#### SHORT CATTI'S BIOGRAPHY

In the registry of births of Rijeka for the year 1849, we can see that on 23<sup>rd</sup> May was born Juraj Catti, son of Maria Carmela Catti and Giorgio Catti, pharmacist. Father came from Switzerland and mother from Dubrovnik. He had two sisters, Carmela who died in 1852 and Anna, married Rosenkard, dead in 1901. He married Giuseppina Rudolf and had a daughter Maria, married Vio. The daughter had two sons. He finished grammar school in Rijeka and in 1862 continued his studies<sup>4</sup> at the Croatian gymnasium which was the continuation of the Jesuit gymnasium from 1627, a well-known school with a number of good professors. He finished his studies in 1867. We found some pictures from that time.<sup>8</sup> The same year he began to study medicine in Wien, where he graduated in March 1873.

We can learn about the first years of his career from the application that he gave to Rijeka's city directory in 1879 for the empty post of head doctor of the reorganized hospital »The Holy Ghost«. He was a very bright student; he worked for 6 months in epidemiology with Prof. Drasche (from 20<sup>th</sup> June 1872 to 9<sup>th</sup> January 1873), and after graduation continued to work in the General hospital, from 20<sup>th</sup> March 1873, to 5<sup>th</sup> April 1874. On 1<sup>st</sup> April he was elected assistant to Prof. Schröter in the clinic for lung and throat illnesses and was still working at the time of application.

Along with his regular work, he led courses of percussion, auscultation, laryngoscopy and rhinoscopy for students and doctors who came from all over the world for specialisation. The success of his seminars is recorded by *Lancet*. Prof. Langer offered him to organise the ORL clinic in Innsbruck. His wide knowledge permitted him to meet the top personalities in medicine, of whom some came also to Opatija. With O. Chiari he worked on the diagnosis of throat cancer and was present at all major sessions. From the descriptions of his works presented in the application, we can find out that he was mostly interested in indirectoscopy with the aid of mirror of nasal pharynx, adenoidal vegetations, throat and upper trachea. In »The Holy Ghost« hospital there were twice as many physicians in relation to number of beds as in Zadar. The hospital had nine doctors, 184 beds and 5 wards: internal, surgery, dermatological-venereal, mental and obstetrics. For that time, that was quite a good level of medical care, but for Catti the possibility of research was far from the one he had with

Inclito Magistrato Civico!



Essendo dicto avviso di concorso del 12 aprile a. c. vacante il posto di medico primario presso l'ospedale civico di Fiume, il sottoscritto supplica di volerglielo compiere, basandosi sui seguenti punti:

- 1) Il sottoscritto è nativo da Fiume, ed è suddito ungarico, et all. A.
- 2) Assolse i suoi studi universitari a Vienna, e fu laureato in medicina nel Marzo 1873 presso la stessa università.
- 3) Per qual aspirante dal 30 luglio 1872 fino al 9 gennaio 1873 all' "i. r. ospedale, Rudolfs Hofburg" in Vienna presso il primario Dr. Dra. Scher, prof. per le malattie epidemiche alla locale università; dal 20 Marzo 1873 fino al 5 Aprile 1874 all' "Allgemeines Krankenhaus" di Vienna qual aspirante e supplente secondario, et all. B, C, D, E.
- 4) Verso proposta del collegio dei professori della facoltà medica all' "i. r. università di Vienna" venne nominato al 1 Aprile 1874 dall' "i. r. ministero dell'istruzione pubblica" e culto ed assistente della clinica per le malattie di petto e della laringe del prof. Schröter, al qual posto occupa anche al presente. All. F.

5) Come tale tenne scarse interruzioni dei corsi di percussione ed ascoltazione, di laringoscopia e rinoscopia per studenti e dottorandi in medicina.

6) Durante questo tempo pubblicò il sottoscritto sette tra opuscoli e di certazioni su diversi rami di medicina, secondo nota dell' allegato.

7) Come si vede dall' all. H. fu nominato il sottoscritto a membro effettivo dell' "i. r. società dei medici" di Vienna.

Il sottoscritto lusingandosi che in cont'derazione dei servizi finora prestati all' università di Vienna sarà esaudita la sua domanda, si segna con distinto rispetto

Vienna 6 Maggio 1879

Giorgio Dr. Catti  
assistente all' "i. r. università di Vienna.

Figure 3 Dr. Catti's application for employment in the hospital »Sveti Duh«

Slika 3 Molba dr. J. Cattia gradskoj upravi Rijeke na natječaj za mjesto primarijusa bolnice Svetog Duha

Prof. Schröter. Nevertheless in Mašek's necrology we can see that Catti continued to publish after his return to Rijeka. Those works are the result of an experienced physician with a remarkable clinical skill. His precision in documentation, explanation and observation is astonishing. He passed his knowledge to younger colleagues and held 25 conferences in Rijeka's Medical Association. He was active during epidemics of cholera and variola, for which he was decorated by the city board. After 46 years of active work he retired to his farm at Begunje, where he passed his time in fruit-growing in »Slovenski sadjar« and helping others. His wish share with others his wealth to demonstrated when he donated all his books to the new by formed ORL clinic in Zagreb. In that clinic, respecting a French usage, the rooms are named after the famous otorhinolaryngologists: Killian, Polizer, Turck, Pieniažek, Moure, Catti, Gradeningo.<sup>13</sup>

We are convinced that this is the right place for Catti,

between the giants of ORL. This becomes obvious if one reads the translation of the work where he described a new instrument for operations in the nasopharynx.<sup>12</sup>

»I ordered pincers for nasopharynx (Nasen-Rachenraum-Zange) at the instrument-maker Reiner, Wien, Franzensring 20. I believe they are efficacious in eliminations of nasopharyngeal vegetations. The drawing represents the pincers in 2/3 of their width. The closing spring is factured in such a manner that the two parts go parallel, not crossing in the joint. Horizontal and vertical parts of the pincers make an angle of 100°, if we relax the handles the pliers go forward, not touching the rear wall of the pharynx. Handles are oval, 1 cm large with center longitudinal cuts. The inside surface of the pliers is a little concave and sharp-toothed. It is useful it to have two pincers, one with shorter and one with longer pliers, to make it possible to operate on children and adults. The use of pincers is

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## I.

### Ueber Behandlung der adenoiden Vegetationen im Nasen-Rachenraume.

Von Dr. **Georg Cattl,**

Assistent der laryngologischen Klinik an der k. k. Wiener Universität.

(Schluss.)

Prof. Schrötter\*) empfiehlt zur Zerstörung von adenoiden Vegetationen im Nasenrachenraume Aetzungen mit Kali causticum, die unter Leitung des rhinoscopischen Spiegels mittelst des gedeckten Schrötter'schen Aetzmittelträgers vorgenommen werden. Diese Aetzungen wirken viel intensiver, als jene mit Lapis und man kann auf diese Art solche Vegetationen in einem kurzen Zeitraume völlig beseitigen.

Zaufal\*\*) und Ganghofner\*\*\*) empfehlen zur Beseitigung des Uebels Aetzungen, die aber nicht vom Munde aus, sondern nach Einführung eines Nasenrachen-trichters von vorn her durch die Nase mittelst eines auf

von der Nase, als vom Munde an, wie sie schon von Ganghofer, dann Hartmann\*) und Anderen empfohlen wurde, ist meiner Meinung nach zur Beseitigung des Uebels nicht zureichend. Jeder, der diese Methode einige Male versuchen wird, kann sich bald von der Langweiligkeit und fast Erfolglosigkeit einer solchen Operation überzeugen.

Bevor ich zur Mittheilung des von mir eingeschlagenen Verfahrens übergehe, will ich nur die Bemerkung machen, dass vielleicht Jemandem meine Kritik über die vielen angewendeten Methoden zu scharf erscheinen wird. Ich habe es aber für meine Pflicht gehalten, über jene Methoden, die ich auch selbst versuchte, offen die dabei gemachten Erfahrungen mitzuthemen.

Ich versuchte anfangs solche adenoide Vegetationen mit einer Choanenzange, wie sie Prof. Störk zur Exstirpation von Polypen im Nasen-Rachenraume in seinem Lehrbuche\*\*) beschreibt, zu entfernen. Ueber die Anwendung der Choanenzange zur Operation adenoider Vegetationen, sagt Störk in dem Capitel\*\*\*), in welchem er seine Nasen-Rachenraum-Guillotine erwähnt: »Wuche-

Figure 4 Front page of the periodical *Monatsschrift für Ohrenheilkunde* No. 2 from 1879, with leading article from Dr. Cattl: *Ueber Behandlung der adenoiden Vegetationen im Nasen-Rachenraume*

Slika 4 Faksimil naslovne stranice časopisa *Monatsschrift für Ohrenheilkunde* br. 2 iz 1879. s uvodnim člankom dr. J. Cattia: *Ueber Behandlung der adenoiden Vegetationen im Nasen-Rachenraume*

simple. First, with the finger or rhinoscopic mirror, we localise and analyse the structure of vegetations. Then, with the left hand forefinger, we push the tongue and we put the pincers with pliers horizontally as far as the rear wall of the pharynx. The pliers now advance towards the vegetations and with a little movement arrive at them. Repeatingly opening and closing the pliers, we first squeeze the vegetations, and then with a little effort we can extract them. With these instruments we can properly operate near fossa Rosenmulleri even if there are large vegetations, the same as near the opening of tuba Eustachii, the rear wall or roof of epipharynx.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In the analysis of the description of these instruments, we can see Dr. Cattl's way of thinking. He was aware of

all the major problems of these operations, such as the incomplete removal of tissue after extraction without visual control or the damages of tuba Eustachii, which inspired him to design these instruments. The name »pincers« or »pliers« tells us that this is not Backman adenotom (1895), nor Gottstein (1896), but an original new instrument that most otorhinolaryngologist will be happy to have. Similar instruments are used to take samples of tissue from epipharynx. Authors of this work were citing other authors,<sup>2,5</sup> in their work »Influence of Endoscopy in Decision for Adenotomy«<sup>14</sup> when they wrote that Gottstein and Backman adenotomes were copies of Cattl's. That was not true, because Dr. Cattl's instrument was more sophisticated and precise. It seems incredible, but none of the authors mention this instrument or describe Cattl's use of it. Skill and proper use of indirectoscopic mirror, are needed for

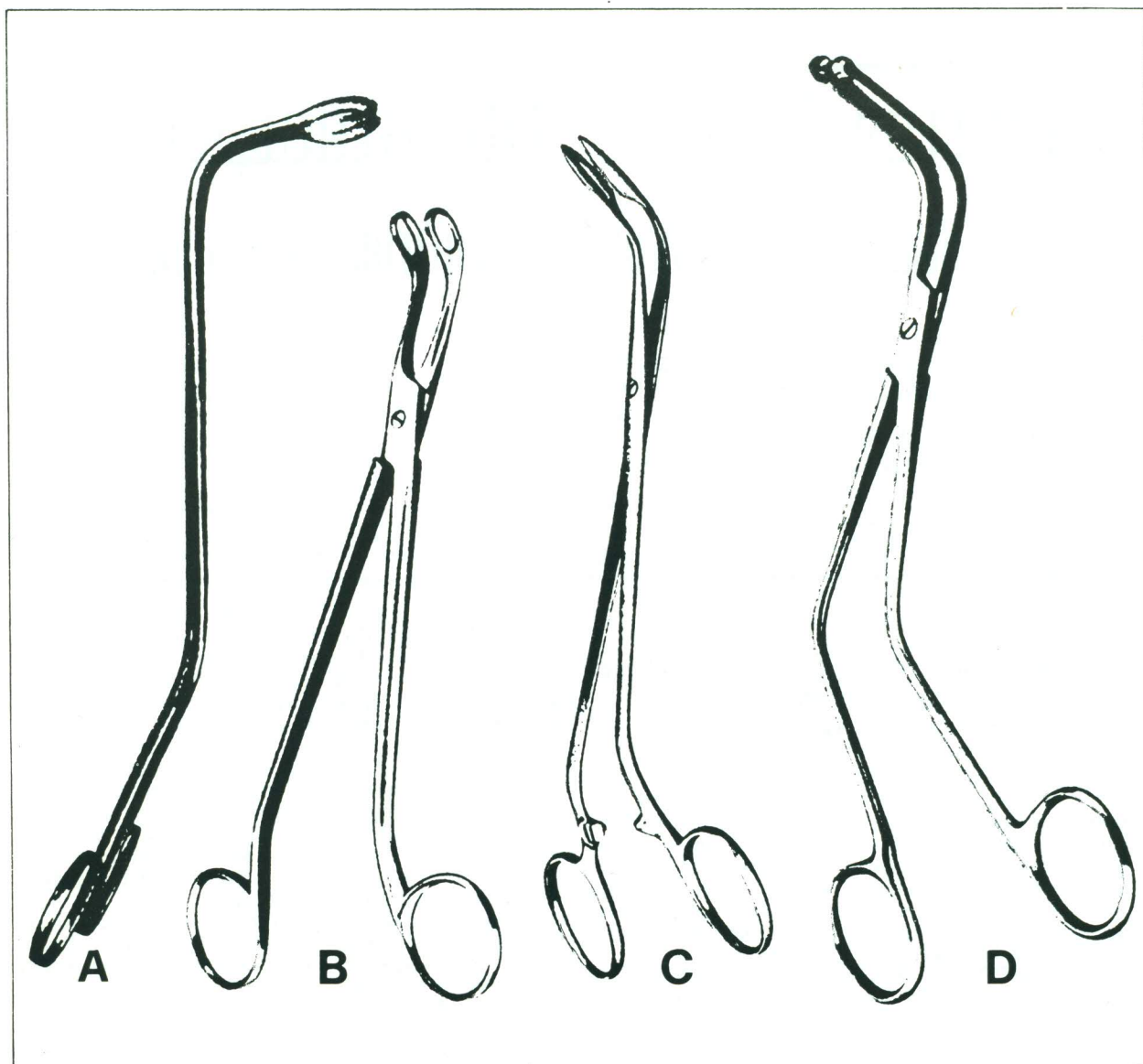


Figure 5 Catti's instrument-grasp from 1879 (A) side by side with modern instruments from Juracz (B, C) and Eckkert-Moebius (D)

Slika 5 Hvataljka dr. J. Cattia (A) iz 1879. u usporedbi sa suvremenim instrumentima prema Juraczu (B, C) i Eckkert-Moebiusu (D)

work with such an instrument, all with the control of the eye.

In the analysis of the development of adenotomy, we can notice that Luschka first described vegetations in 1868 and Mayer first described experiences in adenotomy through nose in 1873. Catti was the first to describe adenotomy through mouth with visual control. It seems normal that with the development, more complicated technical operations were substituted by instruments that made work simpler. We who normally use indirectoscopy as a method of inspection of the pharynx can see the effects of such routine operations and nowadays we return to Catti's method.<sup>14</sup>

In the title of our work we put the following statement: Juraj Catti was a distinguished person, meticulous and

conscientious writer and critical researcher. These characteristics make him one of the great pioneers of ORL. He understood the importance of the nasal part of the pharynx and the use in diagnostics of the sophisticated technique of mirror indirectoscopy.

The authors emphasize the importance of using original texts or photocopies for making conclusions in medical history. It is interesting to notice that Catti's work used to be published in a well-known review, and nowadays none of the authors that treat problems of adenotomy and tonsillectomy remember him.

To emphasise once more, the medical historians have to be more meticulous, because in contrast to other parts of medicine, in the history of medicine there are no newcoming facts, but only old facts that are to be pointed at.

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## MJESTO DR. JURJA CATTIA U SVJETSKOJ MEDICINI

Izvorni znanstveni članak

**Ključne riječi:** Catti, povijest otorinolarinologije, adenotomija, nazofarinks

**Primljeno:** 1990-05-24

**SAŽETAK** Liječnicima čije djelo još uvijek čeka potpuniju znanstvenu evaluaciju pripada i riječki liječnik dr. Juraj Catti (1849-1923), vrstan internist i pokretač otorinolarinologije kao zasebne specijalnosti u Rijeci i na širem jugoslavenskom prostoru. O njegovu radu napisano je tek nekoliko priloga. Na osnovi novijih istraživanja autori nastoje popuniti praznine u Cattiovoj biografiji i procijeniti važnost dr. J. Cattia i njegov doprinos razvoju otorinolarinologije. Iz molbe koju je 1879. dostavio gradskoj upravi na natječaj za mjesto primarijusa gradske bolnice Sveti Duh, saznajemo da je već kao student u Beču radio na epidemiologiji u prof. Draschea. Nakon promocije izabran je za sekundarca u Općoj bolnici, a zatim za asistenta na Klinici za bolesti pluća i grla u prof. Schrotera. Nakon povratka u Rijeku Catti nastavlja stručno usavršavanje i do konca radnog vijeka ostaje jedan od temeljnih stupova riječke bolnice. Uz to, neumorno istražuje i objavljuje niz radova u domaćim i međunarodnim stručnim časopisima. Najveću pozornost zaslužuje Cattiev instrument za odstranjivanje vegetacija u nazofarinksu. U usporedbi sa sličnim instrumentima uočavamo originalnost J. Cattia u pristupu tom problemu. Svjestan je toga da ukoliko se radi bez kontrole oka tkivo vegetacije može zaostati i moguća su oštećenja Eustahijeve cijevi. Već i nazivi »klijesta« ili »hvataljke« upućuju na to da se ne radi o adenotomu Gottsteina (1886) ili Bacmana (1895) već o originalnu rješenju. Autori su uspjeli pronaći crtež instrumenta, a original je najvjerojatnije zagubljen. Pogledamo li povijesni razvitak adenotomija, uočavamo da je Luschka godine 1868. opisao vegetacije, a Meyre godine 1873. prva iskustva s adenotomijama kroz nos. Catti u svom radu godine 1879. prikazuje adenotomije izvođene kroz usta pod kontrolom oka. Svakako da je postupak što je iziskivao veliku umješnost ustuknuo pred instrumentima koji su omogućili brži rad prilagođen rutini. Svi koji provode indirektnoskopski pregled nosnog ždrijela znaju posljedice rutinskih adenotomija. Zato se danas vraćamo Cattiovoj metodi tj. adenotomijama uz kontrolu ogledalom. Catti je shvatio važnost prostora nosnog ždrijela i rješavanje dijagnostike tada najsuvremenijim pomagalicama – ogledalima za indirektnoskopiju. Mada je svoja iskustva objavio na mjerodavnim mjestima, njegovi suvremenici nisu ga posve shvatili. Ukazujući na zanemarene izvore u starijoj literaturi, autori nastoje podsjetiti i dokazati da dr. Juraj Catti neprijeporno zauzima značajnije mjesto i u povijesti svjetske medicine.