

# Medical Association in Fiume (Associazione Medica Fiumana) - First Professional Association of Physicians In Fiume (Rijeka)?

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## THE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION IN FIUME (ASSOCIAZIONE MEDICA FIUMANA) – THE FIRST PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PHYSICIANS IN FIUME (RIJEKA)?

### RIJEČKO UDRUŽENJE LIJEČNIKA (ASSOCIAZIONE MEDICA FIUMANA) – PRVA STRUKOVNA UDRUGA LIJEČNIKA U RIJECI?

Ana Alebić-Juretić\*

#### SUMMARY

*The second half of the 19th century in Fiume (now Rijeka) was characterized by the expansion of industrial activity and trade, and the new wealth resulted in a dynamic social life. As a consequence, many new associations were founded in the city, including the Medical Association in Fiume (Associazione medica fiumana), which was established in 1901. The founding procedure was really fast. On January 10th, 1901, the founding committee delivered four samples of the Statute in Italian and one in Hungarian to the Municipality. These were to be passed on via the Governor's office to the Hungarian Ministry of the Interior for approval. On May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1901, the governor informed the Municipality about the received approval and returned two copies of the statute to the Association. The founding assembly was held on May 23rd, 1901, in the building of the Municipal School for Boys (Ciotta St. 1). The Association's goals included the improvement of medical knowledge, the protection of professional interests, and the enhancement of communication between colleagues. The first president elected was Dr. Giorgio Catti, who held this position until 1913. The members were divided into two categories: ordinary members, who were residents of the town, and extraordinary members residing*

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*elsewhere. The official language was Italian, but lectures and discussions could be conducted in any language. The association ceased its activity with the beginning of World War I.*

**Keywords:** *Fiume (Rijeka), history of medicine, medicine, association*

## INTRODUCTION

Following the Hungarian-Croatian agreement of 1868, the city of Fiume (currently Rijeka, Croatia) obtained a status of *corpus separatum*. As part of the Kingdom of Hungary, the city was a separate administrative unit with a degree of autonomy. Italian was the official language of the municipal institutions, separated from nearby Ban's Croatia. Fiume was also the only port of the Kingdom of Hungary, and the Hungarian state invested large sums in the city's infrastructure. From 1850 to 1910, the city population quadrupled, passing from 12,000 to almost 50,000 inhabitants (Fried, 2020; Klen, 1988; Stelli, 2017). Many investors were attracted to further develop the city's economy, and the new wealth resulted in cultural growth. However, it also led to an increased need for medical assistance and information about health conditions. As in other Habsburg developing cities, Fiume had a developing cultural life (Judson, 2018), and due to the rapid development of natural sciences in the second half of the 19th century, many associations were founded with the scope of promoting natural sciences. One of the first of that kind was the Club for Natural Sciences (Naturwissenschaftlichen Club in Fiume/ Club di scienze naturali in Fiume), founded in November 1883. More than 100 people joined the Club: teachers in municipal elementary and secondary schools, as well as the Naval Academy, physicians, dentists, lawyers, owners, industrialists, architects, engineers, maritime officers, mayor, diplomats, and even the Governor. Due to such a wide range of professionals, the work area was extended to include other sciences and techniques, medicine, and literature. Therefore, many physicians held lectures on diverse topics that were of broad interest in the city (Alebić-Juretić, 1998). The successful work of the Club might be the reason why the first professional medical association in Fiume (Associazione medica fiumana) was founded only in 1901, 18 years after the Club for Natural Sciences.

### **Medical professionals within the Club for Natural Sciences**

From the member list provided in the Bulletin for Natural Sciences, the physicians, dentists, and pharmacists enrolled in the Club are presented in Table 1. Among them are several well-known names, such as Antonio Grosich (Gruber & Škrobonja, 2009), a world-renowned surgeon who introduced

iodine tincture as a disinfectant in surgical operations and later became involved in the political battle for determining the fate of Fiume in post-World War I period (Stelli, 2017). Giorgio Catti (Manestar et al., 1990), an internist and founder of otorhinolaryngology in Fiume, invented a device for removing nasopharyngeal vegetation. Additionally, Giovanni Benzan was the first physician involved in public health issues in Rijeka at the turn of the 19th to 20th century (Alebić-Juretić, 2010).

Table 1. List of physicians, dentists, and pharmacists enrolled in the Club for Natural Sciences (Mittheilungen, 1896).

Period	Physicians	Dentists	Pharmacists
1883–1896	Giovanni Benzan Giorgio Catti Jr. Giovanni Celligoj Karl Elsass Pietro Gorzalini Antonio Grossich Giovanni Kiseljak Stefan Paulay Josef Potočnik Moritz Richtmann Anton Seeman	Desiderio Dalma Edmund Krausz Adolf Schindler	Giorgio Catti Anton Mizzan Giovanni Prodam
1897	Anton Holtzabeck	Nikolaus Givovich	
1898	Alexander Grünfeld		Carl Accurti Franco Prodam
1903			Hadrian Mizzan
1904	Anton Micaich		

As a medical branch, public health was introduced only in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, subsequently establishing legal regulations in the field. Thus, public health was regulated in Austria by Imperial Law No. 68 on April 30<sup>th</sup>, 1870, which was introduced in Istria the subsequent year (Cigui, 2012). In Hungary, the law on public health was enacted by Law XIV in 1876, and the same law was accepted by the Fiumian municipal government (Raccolta, 1887) but not by Croatia (Sbornik, 1887). As a separate administrative unit in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Croatia followed its own path regulated by respective laws (Dugački & Regan, 2019).

While they were members of the Club for Natural Sciences, the physicians were quite active in promoting public lectures, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Medical professionals delivered many lectures in the Club (Mittheilungen, 1896–1904).

Date	Lecturer	Lecture
22/01/1886	A. Grossich	Surgery in ancient and modern times
26/03/1886	A. Grossich	Spreading of the human race
15/03/1889	A. Grossich	Our brain and our nerves
10/10/1889	G. Benzan	Microorganisms in human nature
11/03/1893	M. Richtmann	Secret matter
27/11/1893	E. Krausz	About tobacco, its consumption and impact on human health
05/03/1896	D. Dalma	Etiology of tooth disease
14/12/1901	G. Benzan	Sanitary conditions in Fiume

Two of the listed lectures might be interesting even today. The first was about “Secret matter” (M. Richtmann), which dealt with some pharmaceutical products declared to be universal medicine, but in fact, they had neither beneficial nor harmful effects. We are still dealing with such issues today. Another interesting presentation focused on tobacco and its impact on human health (E. Krausz), which remains a subject of research even today. In this context, a new initiative appeared to have established its own medical association, obviously expanding its activities beyond organizing lectures and utilizing the Club’s library (Mittheilungen, 1896).

### Foundation of the Medical Association in Fiume (Rijeka)

The foundation of medical associations in Central Europe started in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Their scope was to promote medical knowledge but also strengthen professional bonds. The medical association in Vienna (*Gesellschaft der Ärzte in Wien*) was established in 1837 (Geschichte, 1938). The Royal Society of Physicians in Budapest (*Societas Medicorum Pestiensium et Budensium*) was founded in the same year (Kapronczay et al., 2011). The Medical Society for Upper Austria (*Medizinische Gesellschaft für Oberösterreich*) in Linz was founded in 1865 (Geschichte, 1938). The first Medical Association in Trieste (*Associazione Medica Triestina*, 2022) was established in 1874, and in the same year, the Croatian Medical Association (*Hrvatski Liječnički Zbor – HLZ*) was founded in Zagreb (HLZ, 2022). The Official HLZ Gazette “Lječnički vjestnik” (*Medical Journal*) for 1898, as an annex, published the list of physicians

working in Croatia, Slavonia, and the city of Rijeka, including all physicians in Fiume with Croatized personal names (Imeni, 1898).

Due to maritime traffic, the city of Rijeka early organized the sanitary service with a municipal physician. During the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, there were 6 to 9 physicians active in the city, whose number was more than doubled (up to 22) by the end of the century (Čulina, 2020) following the increase in the population of the city. The rising number of physicians within the city and advancements in the field of medicine promoted the foundation of the independent medical association in Rijeka.

During the period when the city had the status of “corpus separatum” within the Hungarian monarchy, the foundation of a civil or professional association was possible in two ways: either as an independent association or a branch of the corresponding Hungarian association. In the case of the Medical Association, the founding committee formed by Dr. Giorgio Catti, Dr. Nathan Kohen, Dr. Desiderio Dalma, Dr. Samuele Maylander, and Dr. Romualdo Descovich wrote the Statute for an independent association located in Fiume. On January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1901, four handwritten copies in Italian and one in the Hungarian language were delivered to the municipal administration (Magistrato) to be passed on via the Governor’s office to the Hungarian Ministry of the Interior for approval. The municipal administration supported this request with a written recommendation and the ministry’s approval arrived soon. On May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1901, the Governor sent a letter of approval to the Municipality. Two samples of the approved Statute were returned to the first president of the Association (HRDARI-22, 1901). The founding assembly was held on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1901 (La Bilancia, 22/05/1901) in the building at the address Ciotta St. 1 (see Cover figure) that hosted the Civic School for Boys, but also the Municipal Museum (Museo Civico di Fiume) and Municipal Library (Biblioteca civica di Fiume). The same building was the residence of the Club for Natural Sciences.

Table 3. List of administration and members of the Association (Guida, 1903–15).

Year	Function	
1903, p. 97	president	Catti Giorgio
	vice-president	Grossich Antonio

	secretary	Jellouscheg Arturo
	treasurer	Kraus Edmondo
	3 <sup>rd</sup> director	Maylaender Samuele
	reviser	Deskovich Romualdo, Taufer Emilio, Schwalba Antonio
	Court of Honor	Eberle Floriano, Garofolo Isidoro, Kiseljak Giovanni, Maylander Giovanni, Dalma Desiderio
1909, p. 207	members	Bachich Nicolo, Blasich Mario, Blaž Vladimiro, Catti Giorgio, Chierago Gius., D'Alma Desiderio, Deskovich Romualdo, Eberle Floriano, Friedman Dav., Garofolo Isidoro, Grossich Antonio, Holtzabeck Giov., Jackovicich Mat., Jellouscheg Arturo, Kisseliak Giovanni, Kresnich Franc, Krausz Edmondo, Lenaz Lionello, Maylander Samuele, Mesanić Bruno, Micaich Antonio, Nobel Ad., Pistel Alfonso, Pospisil Gius., Pozder Antonio, Schwalba Antonio, Seeman Antonio, Tauffer Emilio, Udina Baldo, Vuckelich Felice
1910, p. 110	president	Catti Giorgio
	vice-president	none
	secretary	Pozder Antonio
	treasurer	Schwalba Antonio
	librarian	Blaž Vladimiro
1911 –12 p. 112	president	Catti Giorgio
	vice-president	Blasich Mario
	secretary	Sichich Ermanio
	treasurer	Schwalba Antonio
	librarian	Blaž Vladimiro; 1912: Falk Giacomo
1913 p. 116	president	Catti Giorgio
	vice-president	Blasich Mario
	secretary	Sichich Ermanio
	treasurer	Schwalba Antonio
	librarian	Falk Giacomo

	3 <sup>rd</sup> director	Kiseljak Giovanni
	reviser	Deskovich Romualdo, Taufer Emilio, Falk Giacomo
1914 –15 p. 220	directorate	Listed as existing but with no names

The assembly elected the directorate: the first president was Dr. Giorgio Catti (Fig. 1), the vice-president Dr. Antonio Grossich, secretary Dr. Nathan Kohen, treasurer Dr. Arturo Jellousheg and Dr. Edmondo Krausz (*Le Bilancia*, 24/05/1901). Subsequent data found in the municipal publication “Guida di Fiume” (Guide of Fiume) on directorates from 1903 to 1913 and the whole membership in 1909 are given in Table 3. No personal data were provided for the war years 1914–15. Although the first issue of *Guida di Fiume* from 1902 exists, the Medical Association is not mentioned within.



Figure 1. Dr. Giorgio Catti, the first president of the Medical Association in Fiume (Rijeka) (Lokalpatrioti, 2020).

Some known individuals are listed in Table 3. Apart from Grossich and Catti, who served as the long-term president of the Association, notable figures include Isidoro Garofolo, the first radiologist at the Municipal Hospital, and Giovanni (Ivan) Kiseljak, who worked in both Fiume and Sušak. Two



more physicians, Nicolo Bachich and Vladimiro Blaž, worked in Sušak. The list clearly shows that the Association gathered both physicians and dentists (Dalma or D'Alma D. and Kraus E.). The following paragraph presents some of the listed physicians and dentists.

It is interesting to note that the Association of Dentists in Fiume, founded on January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1909, was organized as a Littoral Section – Fiume (*Sezione Litorale – Fiume*) of the (Hungarian) Royal Stomatology Association (*Associazione stomatologica del Regno*). According to the documents, this section was dismissed in February 1914 (HRDARI-22, 1901). The first president was Edmondo Krausz, while Desiderio Dalma served as the secretary (Muzur, 2013). The difference between an independent association and branches of registered associations in Fiume was that branch activity was regulated by an ordinance towards the headquarters, while local associations had to provide all documents and apply for Ministerial approval. Not all applications were approved. According to Fried (2005), the Ministry of the Interior Affairs rejected seven out of 123 submitted applications in the period 1873–1918. Without having found the reason why one should select a branch office of the capital or an independent organization to be founded, one can only assume that the number of potential members was a decisive factor. While there were more than 50 physicians in the Fiume area, there were fewer than ten dentists. Although we lack more information about its activity, it is evident from Guida di Fiume (1915) that the Association was active in 1915. However, the names of the members of the directorate are missing.

### **Statute regulations**

In 45 articles, the Statute (HRDARI-22, 1901) described the scope and activity. As in previously established national and regional associations of physicians, the scope of the Association was not only to spread new achievements in medicine but also to strengthen social communication between members and protect the interest of the medical class (Article 2).

The members could be ordinary, extraordinary, and founder. The ordinary members were those who lived and worked in the city, while the extraordinary lived outside the city (Article 4). Those who donated at least 100 fl were included as founders and would be listed as donators (Article 5). The membership fee was 4 kr per month, while the corresponding Club for Natural Sciences fee was 6 fl annually (Alebić-Juretić, 1989). The higher fee in the Medical Association can indicate a stricter membership, i.e., a focus on protecting the interests of the medical class (Article 2), akin to future medical

chambers. It is interesting to note that extraordinary members had to pay half of the ordinary membership fee (Article 7). Withdrawal from the Association should be announced with a notice no later than two months before the end of the year; otherwise, it would be assumed to continue (Article 9).

The ordinary members had the right to: a. participate in scientific and social meetings; b. hold lectures on various medical topics; c. use the library and reading room; d. take part in congress; e. have the right to vote; f. vote and be elected for administrative functions in the Association. Extraordinary members could use only rights listed from a. to c., while the funders could not use any of these rights (Article 10).

The official language of the association was Italian, but the lectures and discussions could be conducted in any language (Article 12). This multilingual communication option was also available in the Club for Natural Sciences, where most lectures were held in Italian, some in German, and a few in French.

The elected directorate consisted of five persons: president, vice-president, secretary, librarian, treasurer, and an extra person who, in case of need, would act instead of any previously mentioned person. Their task was to represent the Association to the authorities and third parties and manage the fund (Article 13). Four members were required to make legitimate decisions, but the president had no right to vote, except in cases where the result was equal, and his vote was decisive (Article 20). The secretary had an obligation to provide the minutes of the meetings and conferences, take care of the library and archive, with obligation not to give any documents to inspections without the president's approval (Article 24). This is an unusual statement, indicating a certain opposition to state authorities.

The treasurer's duty was to take care of all accounting matters (Article 25), including annual balance and plans that are subjected to revision of two of three elected revisers.

Potential quarrels among the members or association authorities were to be discussed in front of the Court of Honor, under the condition that they not be made public. The Court of Honor comprised five elected members, but three judges were employed for every case. It is interesting to note, the first judge was elected by agreement of appointed members between the two already elected (Article 32).

In the case of dissolution (Article 44), all material goods were to be assigned to the president to take care of them for a year. If, after that time, the

Association was not renewed, all the goods were to be left to the Municipal Library (Biblioteca Civica di Fiume). Unfortunately, nothing has been found yet about the Association at the University Library in Rijeka, the successor to the Biblioteca Civica di Fiume.

## Prominent persons within the Association

### *a. Internationally recognized physicians*

Among members of the Association, there are some individuals of importance in the field of medicine on the international level and/or those who support local politics. The three physicians who made significant contributions to medicine were the first and long-time president Giorgio Catti, Antonio Grossich, and Lionello Lenaz.

*Giorgio (Gjuro) Catti* (1849–1923) was born in Fiume, where he attended elementary school and the Gymnasium. Subsequently, he began studying medicine in Vienna and graduated in March 1873. As a student, he spent six months in the epidemiological department. After graduation, he continued to work in a Viennese general hospital, subsequently joining a Clinic for Lung and Throat Diseases (Manestar et al., 1990). In 1876, he became a member of the Viennese Medical Society. In 1879, he applied for a primarius position at the Civic Hospital, thus declining an offer to establish an otorhinolaryngological clinic in Innsbruck. In addition to his hospital work, he maintained a private practice. He played a role during epidemics of variola and cholera in Fiume. He delivered 25 lectures at the Fiumian Medical Society. After retiring in 1923, he moved to his estate in Slovene Begunje, where he took over the orchards. Even at this late age, he continued to publish works on fruit growing.

Having returned to Fiume, he continued to publish papers on medical topics, including climate therapy in the Kvarner Bay area. His principal contribution to medicine is the construction of pincers for the elimination of nasopharyngeal vegetation. Such pincers are still used in Rijeka. Another invention was the kahlea, which was used in dermatology. He published works about diagnoses of throat cancer and tuberculosis, changes in the throat during infective diseases, and operational techniques of respiratory organs. In the early days of pediatrics, he collaborated with another physician – Franz (Franjo) Kresnik (Muzur, 2013).

*Antonio Grossich* (1849–1926) was born in Draguč, a small town near Buzet in Istria. After finishing primary and grammar school in Pazin and Koper, he studied law in Graz but then switched to medicine in Vienna. After gradu-

ating in 1875, he secured his first position in Kastav (near Fiume), where he spent three years (1876–1878), and subsequently moved to Fiume. He later returned to Vienna to specialize in obstetrics and surgery under famous Viennese professors. He was offered a position as an assistant to Professor Eduard Albert, a surgeon who advocated for the use of antiseptics during surgery, but Grossich refused and returned to Fiume. By 1886, he was a well-established hospital physician and the Head of the Surgery Department, a position he retained until his retirement just before the outbreak of WWI. He was an excellent surgeon who even operated at the Fiume Civic Hospital sometimes and was a friend of many prominent professors. Grossich wrote several medical articles, books, and novels but deserves to be remembered for his work on antiseptics (Gruber & Škrobonja, 2009). In 1908, he published his first article about *A new method to sterilize the skin during operation* (Eine neue Sterilisierungs Methode der Haut bei Operationen) in *Zentralblatt für Chirurgie*. In 1909, he reported the results in a lecture given at the Budapest Surgery Congress. His simple antiseptic method, based on an iodine compound and used at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was quite successful. It was employed during both World Wars and remains important today as an alternative in operating rooms. Due to the wide application of iodine disinfection in surgery, Antonio Grossich is definitively the most prominent physician from Fiume (Rijeka). His importance in medicine is now somewhat underestimated due to his political activity. In 1898, he was elected to the City Council, fighting against the “Hungarization” of Fiume in the period 1905–08. In 1914, he was appointed as the mayor’s substitute (when the Emperor rejected Riccardo Zanella as Mayor). During the period 1918–1920, he was elected as the president of the Italian National Council (Consiglio Nazionale Italiano), which supported the annexation of Fiume to Italy. As a member of Fiume’s delegation, he participated in the Peace Conference in Paris. In 1921, he was a temporary prime minister of the Free State of Fiume. In 1923, he entered the Italian Senate (Muzur, 2013). A monograph dedicated to his medical, literal, and political activity has been recently published (Cigui, 2017).

*Lionello Lenaz* (1872–1939) was born in Fiume to a relatively wealthy family. He finished elementary school and the Gymnasium in Fiume and continued his education by studying medicine in Vienna (1889–1895). After graduation, he spent another six years in Vienna working as an assistant in various medical departments and laboratories dealing with neurology and blood analyses. In 1901, he returned to Fiume to oversee the newly established Bacteriological Laboratory at the municipal hospital and serve as an adviser to the health

(insurance) fund (Cassa malati). He also became a member of the Italian Literary Circle and, subsequently, joined the Autonomist Association and an irredentist association, "Giovine Fiume". After WWI, he was a member of the Italian National Council (CNI). In 1919, he was promoted to the position of primarius in the Civic Hospital. During D'Annunzio's temporary government, he was Minister of Public Education. He habilitated medical special pathology at Rome University and held courses on nephrology, hematology, and pathology during three academic years, from 1927 to 1930, at the Medical Faculty in Padua. He published 32 papers in prestigious professional journals dealing with neurology, physical chemistry (water exchange in the human body), nephrology, and hematology. His principal work is "Lessons of Hematology" (Lezione di hematologia). Lenaz confirmed, in fact, the neoplastic nature of leukemia (Sepčić et al., 2006).

#### *b. Physicians and politicians*

In addition to these three internationally recognized physicians for medical merits, there are others known for their political attitudes regarding the city's fate. They followed a similar path: first joining Circolo Letterario, then becoming a member of the Autonomist Association that supported the city's independence and/or annexation to Italy.

*Isidoro Garofolo* (1863–1945) was an ophthalmologist. He finished elementary and secondary school in Fiume. In 1888, he graduated in medicine from the University of Graz, after which he continued his education in ophthalmology in Vienna. Upon returning to Rijeka, he was employed at the General Hospital as an ophthalmologist and retained this position until his retirement in 1923. According to some sources, he was considered an unqualified ophthalmologist (Muzur, 2013), but this is unlikely. Isidoro Garofolo was the physician who took over the first Röntgen apparatus when it was ceded from the Club for Natural Sciences in Rijeka to the Civic Hospital at the end of 1898 (Alebić-Juretić, 2009). Therefore, he could be considered the first radiologist, not only in Rijeka but also in Croatia. He was one of the founders and presidents of the Literary Circle (Circolo letterario), the most important cultural association in the city to promote Italian culture. In 1905, he joined the irredentist association, "Giovine Fiume". Post WWI, he was a member of the Italian National Council, which approved the arrival of D'Annunzio in Rijeka and became his personal physician. Additionally, he was a representative of the Dante Alighieri Association and Italian Touring Club in Rijeka. He died in Fiume at the end of WWII (Muzur, 2013).

*Samuele Mayländer* (1866–1925) was born in Siófok, Hungary. He was possibly a relative of the more famous politician Michele Mayländer. He finished the civic elementary school and the Hungarian Gymnasium in Fiume. In 1885, he started medical studies in Vienna and graduated in 1892. Returning to Fiume, he got a job as a secondary physician in the Civic Hospital, whose director was Antonio Felice Giachich. The following year, he wrote a booklet, “L’ospedale generale civico di Fiume nel 1893”, dedicated to the director Giachich on the occasion of 50 years of working in the hospital. This is the only publication available from Mayländer. In 1895, he secured a position as a physician for the District Fond for Sick Workers (Cassa distrettuale per l’assicurazione degli operai ammalati), a role he maintained throughout his life. Alongside his physician colleagues, his cousin, jurist Michele Mayländer, and Francesco Vio, he founded the Literary Circle (Circolo letterario) with the goal of promoting Italian literature without political affiliations. With an aim to defend the city’s autonomy, all these individuals were involved in the foundation of the Autonomist Association (Associazione autonoma). He was one of the 12 founders of the Circle of Social Studies (Circolo dei Studi sociali) and held this position until the beginning of WWI. In 1915, he was elected to the Municipal council as the first representative of socialists who supported the independent state of Fiume. During the congress in 1921, the Socialist Party turned into a Communist, and Mayländer was its first president, but he soon resigned and finished his political career (Jeličić, 2015).

*Desiderio Dalma* (1863–1931) was a dentist in Fiume. He originated from the Slovak place Vágbeszterce. He studied medicine at the University of Vienna but subsequently specialized in deontology. He had his first position in Pola (Pula), and in 1894 he moved to Rijeka. He opened the first ambulance in Fiume in 1895 and another one in a hotel in nearby Abbazia (Opatija). In a later period, he was employed at the Civic Hospital. Additionally, he served as the secretary of the Association of Dentists – a Littoral Section – in Fiume. Two of his four sons made an impact in the field of medicine in Fiume. Giovanni Dalma (1895–1977), who commenced medical studies in Vienna (1913), continued in Budapest (1914), and completed in Padua (1920). During WWI, he spent some time as a paramedic on the Russian front and on the Isonzo/Soča River. Upon his return to Fiume, he secured a position as an assistant to Lionello Lenaz at the Civic Hospital. After involvement in politics as an Autonomist, he briefly left the city, visiting various European medical institutions and countries, and became involved in psychiatry. Upon his return to Fiume in 1929, he was appointed head of the Psychiatric Department at

the Civic Hospital but lost this position following the proclamation of Racial Laws in Italy. In 1943, he fled to Italy and, subsequently, in 1948, to Argentina, where he founded the first medical school and later the Faculty of Medicine in Tucuman. Less is known about his brother, Gustavo Dalma, a chemist. He served as the head of the Chemical Department at the Regional Laboratory for Hygiene and Prevention in Fiume (Lab oratorio provinciale d'igiene e profilassi). He lost this position due to the activation of Racial Laws in Italy in 1938. He initially moved to Switzerland, where he worked in the laboratory of the future Nobel laureate Dr. Lavoslav Ružička, synthesizing alkaloids, and subsequently moved to Tucuman in Argentina (Muzur, 2013).

*Mario Blasich* (1878–1945) was the principal municipal physician (profesico) in the period 1906–1919, succeeding Giovanni Benzan. He graduated in medicine in Budapest in 1901 (Ordine dei medici, 1930). Apart from his medical career, he was deeply involved in painting. During WWI, he volunteered in the Italian army as a sanitary officer in the 116th Infantry Regiment. He was one of the key members of the Autonomist Association and, therefore, was appointed as a minister in the Zanella's government in 1921/22. After the Treaty of Rapallo and the annexation of Fiume to Italy, he continued his medical practice. Due to illness, he lost both legs. At the end of WWII, he refused to support the annexation of Fiume to former Yugoslavia (Blasich, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022). He was killed by the Yugoslav army in his apartment during the final battles for Rijeka in WWII on the night between May 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1945 (Muzur, 2013).

### c. *Other physicians from Fiume (Rijeka)*

*Nathan Cohen (Kohen) Jr.* (1873–1901) was born in Fiume to a wealthy Jewish family that went bankrupt. He was baptized soon after birth at the Table church. Remaining an orphan after the death of both parents, he spent his childhood in poverty. He graduated from the Hungarian State Gymnasium with financial support from the Glavinić and Thonnhausen education fund. Subsequently, he began studying medicine at the University of Vienna, obtaining a “Doctor of Medicine Sciences” degree in 1897. Upon returning to Fiume, he worked at the Civic Hospital as the secondary physician-surgeon for three years and served as a secretary of the Fiumian Medical Association. Although esteemed for his honesty, sacrifice, and diligence, in a moment of mental crisis, he committed suicide in 1901 (Lukežić, 2014).

*Romualdo Descovich* (1866–1921), a dermatologist and pediatrician, was a member of the Viennese Dermatological Society (Guida, 1902). In 1898, he

held the position of municipal police physician in Fiume and participated in a massive vaccination against the variola virus. Before 1914, he worked as a dermatologist at the General Hospital in Fiume. He was one of the three physicians (the other two being Dr. Josipovich from military service and Dr. L. Roheim, a private physician) responsible for the Red Cross War Hospital organized in Fiume at the beginning of WWI (Manojlović, 2017).

*Edmondo Krausz* (1862–?) was a dentist born in Somogy Kéthely, Hungary. In 1892, he moved to Fiume, where he established a private practice. Edmondo obtained Italian citizenship in 1927 and relocated to Abbazia in 1930. Although he only regained his license in 1936, he fled to France in January 1939 as he lost his Italian citizenship due to the Racial Laws (HR DARI-53, 1939). Edmondo Krausz was the president, while Desiderio Dalma served as the secretary of the Regional Dentist Association, a branch office from Budapest (Muzur, 2013).

#### *d. Croatian physicians from Sušak*

Croatian physicians working in Sušak also joined the Association. Among them:

*Ivan* (Giovanni) *Kiseljak* (1853–1915) was born in Zagreb and graduated in medicine from the University of Vienna in 1880. In 1885, he secured a position as a secondary physician in Fiume, and the following year, he relocated to Sušak, where he assumed a position as a regional physician. Having spent some time in Gospić, he returned to Sušak and continued with private praxis. Engaging in the fight against alcoholism, he also addressed public health issues, such as potable water supply at the regional level. In 1897, he was elected president of the Croatian National Reading Room (Narodna čitaonica) in Fiume (Muzur, 2013).

*Nikola Bačić* (1864–1943) was born in Ragusa (Dubrovnik). In 1888, he graduated with a degree in medicine from Vienna University. He was a municipal physician in Sušak from 1891 and became a member of the Croatian Medical Association (Hrvatski liječnički zbor) in 1893 (HLZ, 1931). Since 1908/09, he held the position of an external teacher of Hygiene at the Gymnasium in Sušak (APSHGuR, 1922). Additionally, he was in charge of the emergency room (Muzur, 2013). At the onset of WWI, he organized educational courses for nurses within the Red Cross in Sušak. Together with Dr. Carlo Otto, he oversaw the war hospital organized in the building of the Sušak gymnasium (Manojlović, 2017). In the post-war period, in 1918/19, he was appointed as the



school physician at the Gymnasium in Sušak and retained this position until 1927 (APSHGuR, 1922).

*Franz (Franjo) Kresnik* (1869–1943) was born in Vienna and studied medicine in Vienna, Graz, and Innsbruck. Around the turn of the century, he moved to Sušak, where he established a private practice. He is mostly known as a constructor of violins, specializing in Cremona. In 1924, he secured a position as a pediatrician in the newly established National Health Care Home (Dom narodnog zdravlja) in Sušak (Jaška Blažić & Bakašun, 2000).

*Vladimir Blaž* (1872–?) was a private practitioner in Sušak. At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, he was employed as Catti's assistant at the Civic Hospital in Fiume but later established his private practice in Sušak. He became a member of the Croatian Medical Association in 1897 (Imenik, 1930). In 1924, he joined the staff at the newly established National Health Care Home (*Dom Narodnog zdravlja*) in Sušak (Jaška Blažić & Bakašun, 2000). He became the first president of the newly established Medical Association of the Croatian Coast and Gorski Kotar (Udruženje liječnika Hrvatskog primorja i Gorskog kotara), founded in 1936 in Sušak, as the majority of the members declared against becoming a local office within the Croatian Medical Association (Frković & Bakašun, 2007).

## CONCLUSION

After the end of World War I, a turbulent time of dispute over the fate of Fiume followed. The Croatian government appointed a commander for Rijeka (Fiume), and a national/urban referendum supported annexation to Italy, but the city continued to function as an autonomous state (Kirchner Rill, 2020). After the occupation by D'Annunzio's volunteers, the Rapallo Treaty agreement enabled the foundation of the Free State of Fiume, whose government was later overthrown by a fascist coup d'état. Following Italian military governance, the city was finally annexed to Italy through the Rome Agreement (Klinger, 2018). During Italian governance, there was no association of medical professionals registered in Fiume. Only the Chamber of Physicians of the Kvarner Province (Ordine dei Medici della Provincia del Carnaro, 1931) was established with the aim of protecting the interests of physicians. Membership was mandatory for all physicians to exercise their practice. Physicians in Sušak remained members of HNL (Imenik, 1931). However, as mentioned earlier, on Vladimir Blaž's initiative, in 1936, local physicians in Sušak organized their own association, the Medical Association of the Croatian Coast

and Gorski Kotar (Udruženje liječnika Hrvatskog primorja i Gorskog kotara), as they did not want to be a branch office of HLZ (Muzur, 2013). After World War II, following the unification of Fiume and Sušak into Rijeka, a similar association was founded only in 1947, but this time as the branch office of the Croatian Medical Association (Frković and Bakašun, 2007).

*Note:* Personal names are written as found in original documents, even if there were some alternations in writing.

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## SAŽETAK

*Brzim rastom privrede raste i društveni život u Rijeci krajem 19. stoljeća. Osnovana su mnoga udruženja, neka kao podružnice matičnih društava iz Budimpešte, druga izvorno riječka. Jedno od takvih bilo je i Riječko udruženje liječnika (Associazione medica fiumana) osnovano 1901. Sam proces osnivanja trajao je kratko. Osnivački odbor je već 10. siječnja 1901. poslao Magistratu četiri primjerka statuta na talijanskom i jedan na mađarskom jeziku, kako bi ga ovaj proslijedio guverneru, a guverner mađarskome Ministarstvu unutarnjih poslova na odobrenje. Već 4. svibnja 1901. guverner je obavijestio Magistrat o prihvaćanju statuta, a osnivačka je skupština društva održana 24. svibnja iste godine. Sjedište udruženja bilo je u Ciottinoj ulici br. 1. Ciljevi društva bili su: usavršavanje znanja iz medicine, zaštita profesionalnih (cehovskih) interesa i poboljšanje komunikacije među kolegama. Prvi predsjednik društva bio je dobro poznati dr. Giorgio Catti. Prema godišnjaku „Guida di Fiume“, na toj je dužnosti bio i u razdoblju 1903. – 1913. Društvo nije bilo mnogobrojno jer su redoviti članovi mogli biti samo liječnici s prebivalištem u Rijeci; oni iz okolnih mjesta mogli su biti samo izvanredni članovi. Službeni jezik društva bio je talijanski, ali su se predavanja i rasprave mogle voditi na bilo kojem jeziku. U takvu okviru udruženje je radilo do početka Prvoga svjetskog rata.*

**Ključne riječi:** *Fiume (Rijeka), povijest medicine, medicina, udruženje*

