

Mountaineers among Croatian Physicians

Throughout the history of medicine, physicians have shown their love for nature either by exploring its wonders or merely by enjoying its beauties. The fact that not even the most rational explorers can remain indifferent to its loveliness may explain the popularity of mountaineering among physicians. Beside their contribution to the medical profession, what they have given to mountaineering is invaluable. After all, they are not any different from other mountain lovers. The following lines, borrowed from the related archives, magazines, books, and personal stories, as well as the author's memories, will try to highlight the history of mountaineering among physicians in Croatia.

Before World War I

The first written accounts of mountaineering among physicians in Croatia date back to the 18th century.

Belsazar Hasquet (1739-1815), French physician, described his many tours in Croatian mountains (1), as well as Ami Boué (1794-1881), a physician from Vienna who traveled through the so-called Turkish Croatia (2). There was also Robert Visiani (1800-1878) from Šibenik. He was the first Croatian physician mountaineer, but more popular as the teacher of botany at the University of Padua and author of a comprehensive book "Flora Dalmatica" (3).

A physician and a great mountaineer Aleksa Praunsperger (1794-1887) initiated the publishing of the first newspapers in Croatian language.

Miroslav Dražić (1815-1879), a physician from Zagreb, was a passionate mountaineer and tourist, who walked all the way from Vienna to Paris and wrote a travel book based on this voyage (4).

Josip Schlosser (1818-1882), Medical Academy member, regional doctor for Croatia and Slavonia, and a famous botanist (5), undertook a major research tour of the mountains of Croatia in 1852, and subsequently published "Flora Croatica", a major work in the field of botany. Schlosser was the first president of the Croatian Mountaineering Association founded in 1874, one of the first in Europe. The stairway leading to the Medical School in Zagreb is called after him – "Schlosser steps".

The Croatian Mountaineering Association, Croatian Medical Association, and Zagreb University were all founded in the same year by the same people. Ladislav Rakovac, Josip Fon, and Šime Švrljuga were some of them (6). Also, members of the Croatian Mountaineering Association were among the first

nine presidents of the Croatian Medical Association (1919) (Franjo Miličić, Antun Schwartz, Šime Švrljuga, Ladislav Rakovac, Ivan Kosirnik, and Dragutin Mašek). Furthermore, during the 19th century all editors of the *Liječnički vjesnik* were also the members of the Croatian Mountaineering Association, such as Josip Fon (1846-1899) (4), Bohumil Jiruš, Antun Lobmayer, and others (7).

Ivan Kosirnik (1847-1924) was an internist and head of the Zagreb University Hospital; a mountaineer, skater, and a firefighter.

Miroslav Čačković (1865-1930), was a member of the historical triumvirate who founded the Zagreb University School of Medicine and the founder of the Department of Surgery at the University Hospital. He was the president of the Croatian Medical Association, the editor of the *Liječnički vjesnik*, as well as one of the first Croatian mountaineers who climbed the Alpine peaks over 3,000 m (Ortler). Čačković also wrote several travel books (8).

Dragutin Mašek (1866-1956) was the second member of the triumvirate, founder of the ENT Department, and president of the Croatian Medical Association (9).

Srećko Bošnjaković (1900-1947), dermatovenerologist and mountaineer, wrote about his experiences of climbing the hill of Klek and Bijejele Stijene (White Rocks) (10).

Milivoj Dežman (1873-1940) was a pulmonologist, writer, politician, and editor of the *Novosti* ("The News"). Inspired by his hopeless love for Ljerka Šram, famous and very beautiful actress, he founded the Brestovac sanatorium (nearby Zagreb) for the treatment of tuberculosis (11).

Fran Gundrum Oriovčanin (1856-1919) encouraged the founding of the mountaineering club in Križevci at the beginning of the 20th century. He wrote several mountain travel books (12,13).

Between Two World Wars

Branimir Gušić (1900-1974), the Academy member and the professor of otorhinolaryngology at the Zagreb University School of Medicine, published a guide to the mountain of Medvednica (14), and later a guide to the mountain of Durmitor (15). He was the president of "Sljeme" mountaineering club in Zagreb, a passionate hiker, and explorer of the Dinarides. His books frequently combined medicine with mountain climbing (16). Gušić was the first post-war president of the Croatian Mountaineering Association and "Zagreb" mountaineering club.

Lujo Thaller (1891-1949), internist, famous for his chronicles of medicine, wrote a number of articles for *Novosti* (4).

Adalbert Georgijević (1899-1991) was president of the "Ivančica" mountaineering club in Ivanec (17,18), a mountain rescuer, and the Head of the Health Center in Samobor after the World War II.

Gjuro Orlić (1886-1981), the founder and a long-time president of the "Orjen" mountaineering club in Dubrovnik, was meritorious for the construction of the mountaineering house on the Orjen mountain (19).

Josip Fleger (1896-1968), professor of dermatovenerology at the Medical School in Sarajevo, was president of the "Bjelašnica" mountaineering club. He organized close cooperation between the Croatian Mountaineering Association and Mountaineering Association of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Fleger was meritorious for the construction of the mountaineering house on the Čvrtnica mountain. In addition to travel books, he wrote studies on the history of Croatian mountaineering in Bosnia and Herzegovina (20,21).

Mountain climbers were also Hinko Emili (1900-1983), professor of hygiene and social medicine at the School of Medicine in Rijeka (22), and Josip Rasuhin (1982-1973), who constructed mountaineering houses (23).

Post-World War II

Branimir Gušić, physician and Academy member, was one of the leading physician-mountaineers, the first president of the Croatian Mountaineering Association and of the "Zagreb" mountaineering club. One of his associates was Mihajlo Pražić (1906-1989), ENT professor, founder and Head of the Audiology Center at Zagreb University Hospital Center, speleologist and author of numerous articles on travel and mountaineering (24,25). Their successor today is Nikola Šprem, professor of otorhinolaryngology at the University Hospital and former mountain rescuer.

We must also mention Stjepan Vidaković (1890-1984), professor of gynecology and Head of the Department of Gynecology; Radovan Ivančić (Zagreb, 1913-), cardiologist and passionate climber who used to take his students for field practice in the Velebit; Branko Kesić, Branimir Gušić, Zlatko Benčić, Zvonko Šestak, and Dunja Beritić (26).

Ivo Veronek (1907-1988) was a pulmonologist, a climber, president of the "Strahinjčica" mountaineering club in Krapina, and vice-president of the "Japetić" mountaineering club in Samobor. He was the author of many articles about mountains (27,28). Zdravko Lorković (1900-1998), geneticist and professor of biology at the School of Medicine in Zagreb, was an independent mountain climber for over 50 years (29).

Vladimir Pajas (1916-1998), physiatrist, is remembered as a record-holder with over 200 slide presentations of his worldwide mountain ramblings (30).

Borislav Mikulić (1930-1968), neuropsychiatrist, was a mountain climber, speleologist, and author of many travel books (31,32).

Mountain lovers among physicians can be found in other Croatian towns.

Vinko Makšan (1920-1979), otorhinolaryngologist from Čakovec and the founder of the ENT Department at the local hospital, was the co-founder of the "železna gora" mountaineering club in Čakovec and its lifelong president (33).

Milivoj Kovačić (Varaždinske Toplice, 1927-) was the president of the "Bilo" mountaineering club in Koprivnica for 20 years. He is meritorious for Koprivnica path (Kalnik-Bilogora) and the construction of the hut (Pesak) on Kalnik. He edited the journal *Bilogorski planinar* ("Bilogora Mountaineer") for 20 years, and wrote many articles on mountaineering.

Đuro Pondelak, physician from Bjelovar, was long-time president of the "Bilogora" mountaineering club and care-taker of Kamenitovac house on the south side of the Bilogora mountain.

Tomislav Sablek (Požega, 1925-), founder of the ENT Department at the General Hospital in Požega. He is a climber, a writer, and a mountain rescuer. Sablek organized mountain rescue service in Požega and the construction of a hut on the Papuk, and wrote the Papuk guide (34).

Nenad Vadić (Pušća Donja, 1936-) is the motivating spirit of "Novi Zagreb" mountaineering club; organizer of trekkings, meetings, and presentations; notable contributor to mountaineering literature; editor of the *Izvor* ("The Spring"; over 100 editions); and explorer and photographer of the Velebit.

Our Contemporaries

Our times are marked by great achievements in expeditions, ie, in Himalayas, and particularly by the development in mountain rescue, which is a new medical sub-specialty. In regard to this, we must mention Boris Aleraj and Dubravko Marković.

Borislav Aleraj (Zagreb, 1946-), epidemiologist and a long-time successful president of the Croatian mountain rescue commission, has organized a number of symposia on mountain rescue related topics and edited three collections of works (35). As the high altitude expedition physician, he became very experienced in mountain medicine and published several articles on the subject (36,37).

Dubravko Marković (Zagreb, 1953-) is head of the Department of Neurology at General Hospital in Pula. He has broad knowledge of mountain medicine, and was a physician in one of the expeditions that climbed the Himalayas. He wrote two books, one about the mountains (38) and the other about mountain medicine (39). He is the president of the "Glas Istre" mountaineering club in Pula.

Blanka Sabolić Kermendy, resuscitation specialist at the General Hospital of Slavonski Brod, is the president of the "Dilj" mountaineering club. The club initiated the foundation of a mountaineering club at the island of Mljet (40), the president of which was

Magdalena Nardelli-Kovačić, a physician from Babino Polje village. With several other enthusiasts, she founded the "Planika" mountaineering club and together with the mountaineers from Slavonski Brod marked the route in the National Park of Nature on Mljet, which has been named after her ("Magdalena's path") (41).

Mountaineering among medical professionals is still very popular, and they climb mountains both in Croatia and all over the world.

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