

## THE SEVENTH PINTAR'S DAYS

### PATHOGRAPHY – THE INFLUENCE OF DISEASE ON THE LIFE AND WORK OF FAMOUS PERSONALITIES

Ljubljana, 18–19 November 2004

The symposium is named after a medical historian Dr Ivan Pintar (1888–1963) who introduced the history of medicine to the programme of the Faculty of Medicine in Ljubljana 70 years ago (1934). It has been gathering all those who respect the medical past and who are rediscovering the forgotten history of health care in the region. Earlier Days presented great personalities who were the pioneers in health care, pharmacy, veterinary science, biology and other natural sciences in Slovenia. The Seventh Days, however, embarked on a topic which had not been addressed in the previous symposiums, that is, on pathography, or the study of the medical biography of an individual, and the influence of disease on the life and work of famous personalities.

This scientific meeting was accompanied by the publication of the Slovene translation of the monograph *Die kranken Habsburger*, written by the renowned Austrian professor of pathology Hans Bankl. This interesting work, well argued and documented, presents the psychophysical health and diseases of the family members of one of the most powerful European dynasties. The publication of the Slovene translation (by Jakobina Slapar and Marjeta Kočevar) the accompanying studies by Zvonka Zupanič Slavec, Igor Grdina, and Marjan M. Klemenčič and the scientific meeting, were to bring the public closer to the central-European nobility, even in this aspect showing their proneness to illnesses.

We wished to open out new views on the influence of disease on the life and work of eminent personalities, particularly rulers and artists. By gaining knowledge of this aspect of existence, we will be able to better

understand certain historical, political and other important decisions, and also to evaluate the significance of psychophysical health and creativity in general.

How great would have been the creative yield in the most diverse domains of the human spirit, had not so many creators of genius succumbed to various diseases? Let us consider just a few examples: tuberculosis caused the death of St Francis of Assisi, Attila the Hun, Molière, Chekhov, Vivaldi, Chopin, Toulouse Lautrec; syphilis caused the death of Erasmus of Rotterdam, Arthur Schopenhauer, Paganini, Flaubert, Baudelaire; cancer claimed Sigmund Freud and Evita Peron; many succumbed to mental derangement; alcoholism dominated in the lives of Alexander the Great, Peter the Great, the American President Lyndon B. Johnson, as well as Stalin and Yeltsin, and the pop star Elvis Presley; drug addiction destroyed the lives of Marlyn Monroe, Janis Joplin, and Jimmy Hendrix; and in more recent times, AIDS has caused the death of Rudolph Nureyev and Freddy Mercury. The present collection of papers is full of similar accounts! This in turn has reminded me of the powerful creative opus long-living artists have bequeathed to mankind such as Verdi or Tolstoy.

I am also aware that better quality of and longer life are likely to favour greater productiveness of a creative person. This is why we doctors feel that psychophysical health must be preserved for as long as possible.

Society cannot and dare not remain unconcerned with individual and collective (epidemic or even pandemic) diseases. Consequently, meetings such as these are not performing merely an academic mission or addressing only the professional audience, for they are also directed towards raising public awareness about health protection, respect for the achievements of public health care, mental hygiene, and a healthy lifestyle. Furthermore, top-quality medicine should do all in its power to aid those who, by their exceptional abilities, enrich all mankind. Let us recall the recent appeal for aid in support of the outstanding flautist, Irena Grafenauer, suffering from leukemia!

This meeting has indicated the possibilities for further interdisciplinary treatment of pathography, which is indeed rich in content! Even though excellent pathographic research has already been done on the central European nobility, and although we are acquainted with their diseases and the consequences of inherited hemophilia, there still

remains for us to understand the pathography of the local (Slovene) nobility; by now we are only aware of the illnesses suffered by the Counts of Celje and the gentry of Turjak. Along with research into the nobility, we would like to gain a better insight into the pathography of eminent artists who suffered from diseases. Indeed, it was a disease –mild, severe or even fatal – that marked their creativity.

For the researchers, much work still remains to be done in order to give due attention to this darker side of the individual's personal life.

We are most grateful that our invitation to the symposium was accepted by the internationally renowned paleopathologist and expert in mummies Professor Eugen Strouhal from Prague. He enriched this meeting with his presentation of the modern possibilities of research into the diseases of ancient Egyptians. The superbly restored mummy of Amon's priest Isahta, which is held in the National Museum in Prague, provided a link in content to the institution in which the mummy has been demystified as an attribute of palaeopathological researches. Professor Ante Škrobonja and Assistant Professor Amir Muzur from Croatia also presented an interesting lecture *Difficulties and Satisfaction of Pathographic Analysis of the Historical Persons in the Case of Hildegard of Bingen*. There were many other participants, and their abstracts have been published in the Proceedings of the Symposium.

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