

CELJE GENERAL HOSPITAL: DEVOTED TO LIFE FOR 120 YEARS

OPĆA BOLNICA CELJE: 120 GODINA POSVEĆENOSTI ŽIVOTU

Marija Počivavšek*

SUMMARY

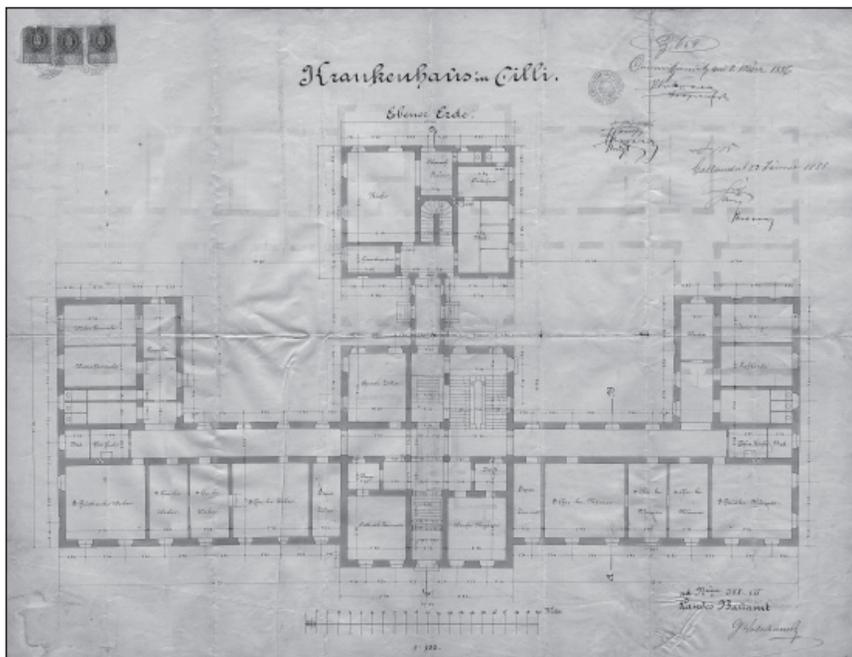
The path that led to the formal opening of Celje Hospital 120 years ago had its beginnings in a medieval town almshouse. Years of commitment to institutionalising inpatient treatment finally led to results in 1887 when the new Giselle's Hospital, named after the emperor's daughter, was solemnly opened by the heir to the throne, Archduke Rudolph. Since its establishment – in addition to the promotion of healthy life-styles and health management, changes in methods of financing and problems such as floods – the hospital's primary value has been caring for the sick. This has been reflected in the work of physicians, nurses, female caregivers and other personnel; as the years passed, this attitude on the part of medical professionals towards patients increased the sense of confidence in the hospital. The local environment knew how to return such confidence, when it first supported the project of the extension and then also modernisation of the hospital, which is still underway. Today, Celje General Hospital holds an important position in the Slovenian public health system: as the third largest hospital in Slovenia, it includes 1600 employees and annually treats 35,000 inpatients and 260,000 people as part of the specialist and outpatient system. Within its periods of growth, the hospital has developed in almost every medical field. Today, we are committed to gaining the status of a clinical hospital, strengthening research activities and constantly improving quality. The motto that represents the mission of the employees of Celje Hospital also embodies the same spirit: "Devoted to life".

Key words: history of medicine, 19th and 20th century, hospital, public health, Celje, Slovenia

* Muzej novejše zgodovine Celje / Museum of Recent History Celje.

Contact address: Marija Počivavšek, Museum Adviser, Prešernova ulica 17, SI-3000 Celje.

E-mail: marija.pocivavsek@guest.arnes.si.



Layout of the ground floor of the Giselle's Hospital, 1866.
(Celje Historical Archives)

Tlocrt prizemlja Gizeline bolnice, 1866. (Povijesni arhiv, Celje)

The Celje General Hospital, today the third-largest hospital in the country, provides complete in- and outpatient specialist healthcare at the secondary level of healthcare service organisation for the inhabitants of the Celje and other regions.

FROM AN ALMSHOUSE TO A HOSPITAL

However, the roots of the hospital go far back in the past. Its beginnings can be found in the Mediaeval town almshouse, which was established next to the former Church of the Holy Spirit by Count Frederick I of Celje; its residents received attention and healthcare, and therefore it may be considered a predecessor of the hospital. At the end of the 15th century they built a new almshouse next to the parish church, which was extended by a chapel dedicated to St Elisabeth [1,2]. Since 1421 there have been mentions of physicians in Celje, at first residential physicians; then, in the 18th century, regional physicians were introduced. In addition

to the physicians, the priests also stationed army surgeons. During the Maria Theresa period an army hospital was built in the town [3], and the 19th century brought even more changes in the field of healthcare: hospitals started to be separated from almshouses. Therefore, in 1824, 26 patient beds were placed in six renovated rooms of the almshouse; this was the very beginning of the Celje hospital [2].

GISELLE'S HOSPITAL

In 1874, for the needs of the hospital, the Celje Municipality bought the Hofer house near Glazija, where the hospital was moved at the end of the year. The municipality board decided to name the future hospital after the emperor's daughter Giselle; thus it became Gizelina bolnišnica (Giselle's Hospital), and the road leading to it Gizelina ulica (Giselle's Street) [1]. In addition to the official name, the term "general public hospital" was often used, since the Celje hospital was losing its urban orientation and gradually becoming a provincial institution. During this period the hospital had two departments: medical and surgical. A year later, care of the patients was taken over by the Sisters of Mercy [5].

The Hofer house was considered a temporary solution; therefore, the provincial authority took the lack of space in the Celje hospital seriously.



Celje Public Hospital near Benjamin Ipavec Road. (Celje General Hospital)

Javna bolnica Celje uz Cestu Benjamina Ipavca (Opća bolnica Celje)



View of a consulting room. (Museum of Recent History Celje)

Pogled u ordinaciju (Muzej novije povijesti, Celje)

They prepared a project for a new hospital for 150 patients, which were to be separated by gender and ailment. It complied with all the hygienic regulations of the time and was to have a special pavilion for the isolation ward. Construction of the new hospital on the north side of the old hospital started in the spring of 1886. The plans were prepared by a provincial engineer, Waidasch, and the building contractor was Tschernitschek from Maribor. The gala opening of the new Giselle's Hospital, which had a capacity of 174 patients, on 27 October 1887 was also attended by the heir to the throne, Archduke Rudolph, and his wife Stephanie [4,5].

Due to the progress of medical science and technique, as well as an increasing number of patients, the need to expand the hospital, especially its isolation ward, soon emerged. Therefore, a new building intended for infectious diseases was set up in 1905 [1,6].

At the beginning of the 20th century, they decided to rearrange the main building and partially extend the north wing. At the time, the hospital included eight independent units: main building, isolation ward,

administration building, lavatory, icehouse, morgue, old isolation ward and old administration building. In 1907 the hospital acquired a telephone; it was connected to the municipal water supply network two years later, and in 1913 also to the power mains. Medical equipment was also being modernised. The new hospital with all its departments was able to admit approximately 260 and in exceptional conditions even 380 patients. World War I, however, imposed an additional burden on the four hospital doctors [1,2].

CELJE PUBLIC HOSPITAL

At the end of the World War I, the provincial government took over all public hospitals in Slovenia and placed them under the Health Department. The government in Belgrade established a Ljubljana Health Division for Slovenia and Istria and, therefore, the Celje Public Hospital was also included in the civil service. Such arrangement was in force up to 1927 when public hospitals were taken over by the authorities – the Celje Public Hospital was subjected to the Maribor authority. The Yugoslavian health legislation of 1930 completely reconfigured the organisation of healthcare. State hospitals, which also included Celje Public Hospital, then operated under the auspices of the newly established civil governments and therefore became civil government public hospitals [7,8].

In the period between World War I and II, the organisation of the Celje hospital was similar to other hospitals. At the beginning it had two departments, surgical and internal; the department of gynaecology and obstetrics became independent in 1920 [5]. With time, the capacities became insufficient for the needs of the residents; therefore, activities to expand the hospital began in 1921. This adaptation helped extend the department for infectious diseases, and a new building for gynaecology and obstetrics was opened in 1932 [9].

In 1936, the Ophthalmology Department was established; however, it was not until three years later that it was assigned five rooms in the central hospital building. Unfortunately, the breakout of World War II and the German occupation prevented further expansion of the Celje Hospital.

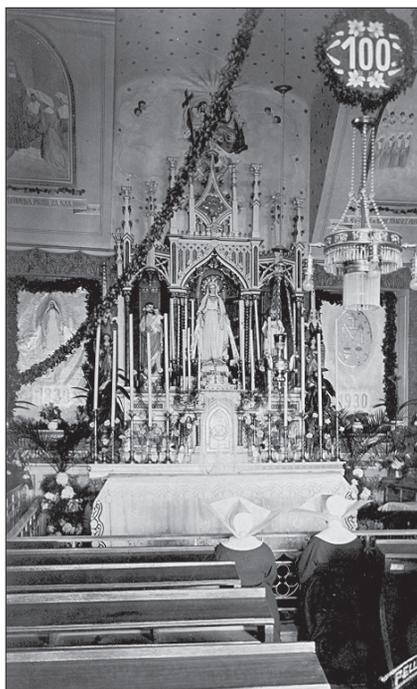
DURING AND AFTER THE WHIRLWIND OF WAR

In 1941, further development of the Celje hospital was involuntarily interrupted by World War II. At the time, the hospital included five departments for surgery, internal medicine, ophthalmology, infectious

diseases, and gynaecology and obstetrics, which together had 400 beds. During the Nazi occupation, the organisation of the health service naturally changed; it was organised according to the German model. At the beginning of the war 114 employees, including 13 physicians, took care of the patients: five head physicians, seven assistants, two female volunteers and one resident. The transition under the German administration also dissolved medical teams of the time. Most Slovenian physicians were fired; only two young female physicians remained working in the hospital. On 11 April, Good Friday, new (German) physicians arrived at the Celje hospital [9]. Despite the strained situation and threats, the Slovenian staff cooperated with the Resistance in Celje as well as other hospitals. They sent medicinal products and hygienic material to partisans via secret routes. During the war, the number of admissions to the Celje hospital remained stable and did not increase compared to previous years. The number of patient beds was also in accordance with the number of admissions; in 1945 the number was the same as in 1940 (405); however, the number of physicians decreased, from 13 in 1941 to nine in 1945 [2].

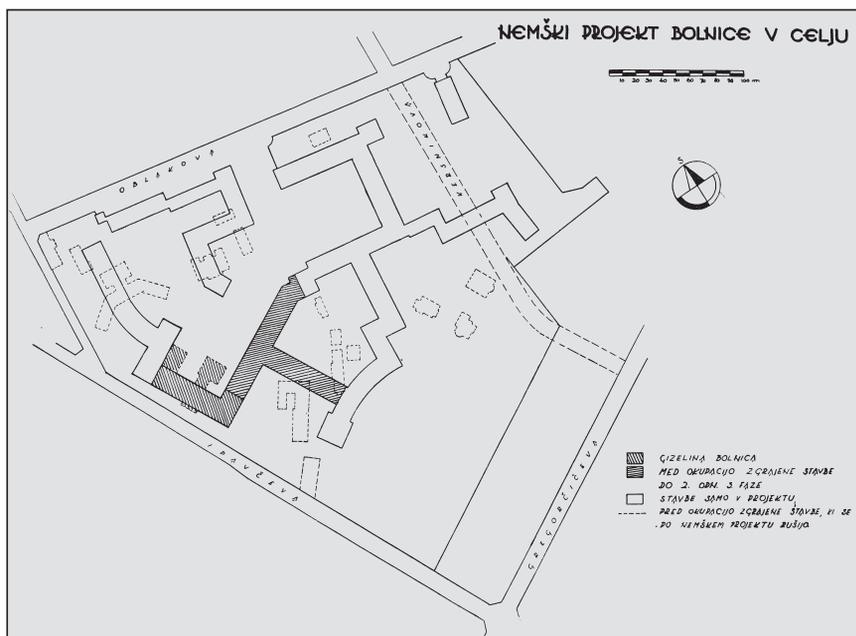
The Nazis had large-scale plans with the Celje hospital: they intended to build a provincial hospital for the whole of Lower Styria with a capacity of 2,000 beds. During the occupation, they started to prepare extensive

projects for the rearrangement and extension of the hospital, which was to become an important regional hospital. The Germans did not change the existing hospital; however, they intended to demolish all the other buildings. In their place, they planned to build a new complex of buildings, which were to be connected with corridors and were to occupy the whole area of the hospital extending across Kersnikova Street up to the surrounding private houses. The Germans pro-



Sisters of Charity in the hospital's chapel. (Sisters of Charity, Ljubljana)

*Sestre milosrdnice u bolničkoj kapeli
(Sestre milosrdnice, Ljubljana)*



Plan of the expansion of the Celje Hospital during the occupation.
(Zdravstvo v Celju in okolici, Celje 1952, p. 88)

*Plan širenja celjske bolnice za vrijeme okupacije
(Zdravstvo u Celju i okolici, Celje 1952., str. 88.)*

ceeded with these plans seriously: they bought all the equipment and material, and started building at the east wing of Giselle's Hospital. Following an intensive start, they stopped construction due to the worsened military and political situation in 1943 and left the buildings uncompleted. Had the Germans realised their plans, Celje would have taken over the leading role in healthcare in Lower Styria [2,6,9].

At the end of World War II, the Celje hospital, which offered healthcare services to the inhabitants of the wider Celje region, was in poor condition and, in addition, exanthematous typhus had broken out in the first months of liberation. In the first days following the end of the war, the hospital was taken over by the military administration of the IV operative zone of the Yugoslav Army [10], and soon after it came under the administration of the Ministry of Public Healthcare. The Celje hospital was planned to become a first class hospital; therefore, it was decided that the uncompleted German wings would be provisionally built and used until a



In the maternity ward in 1943. (Celje Central Library)

U rodilištu, 1943. (Centralna knjižnica, Celje)

new modern hospital outside the town could be built. The hospital suffered from a severe lack of space; therefore, a new paediatric department had to be disjunct [9].

In January 1947, the state authority handed over the hospital to the local authority, Mestni ljudski odbor (Municipal People's Board) [5]. In 1948, the hospital consisted of seven departments: surgery, internal medicine, gynaecology, ophthalmology with otology and rhinology, paediatrics, pathomorphology, and infectious disease. In the period following the war, the development of the new hospital, which took on first-class status, was earmarked by the centralisation of the healthcare system, strict professional control and the development of the Ljubljana Faculty of Medicine. New treatment methods, improvisations, innovations and new specialist outpatient clinics were being introduced. With a reorientation towards outpatient forms of treatment, they attempted to reduce the number of hospitalised patients, since the scope of work in the hospital had increased significantly and the number of the employees also increased following the war. Due to the poor material working conditions, the greatest problem was presented by the lack of professional staff. The hospital management

tried to solve this problem by educating and training medical staff; in 1954, a school for nurses was established in Celje and later also a one-year school for paediatric caregivers [9].

CELJE GENERAL HOSPITAL

A more organised approach to the extension of the hospital was taken only in 1952. At the time, a new primary healthcare centre was being built in the vicinity of the hospital and it became clear that the hospital would not be moved to another location [5]. Contrary to the haphazard extension in the past, the hospital was gradually being reasonably organised and an appropriate balance between hospital and working areas established. In 1953, self-management was also being introduced into healthcare; the same year, the management board of the Celje General Hospital was appointed [11].

In addition to the management board and professional healthcare units for common needs, in 1957 the hospital comprised the following



Wing built in the extension of the Giselle's Hospital (right) during the occupation. (Museum of Recent History Celje)

*Trakt koji je u produžetku Gizeline bolnice (desno) izgrađen za vrijeme okupacije
(Muzej novije povijesti, Celje)*



A great flood affected the hospital in 1954, with the water level reaching a meter and a half in height. The staff courageously rescued everything that could be saved. (Celje Historical Archives)

Godine 1954. bolnicu je pogodila velika poplava. Voda je dostigla visinu od metar i pol, osoblje je požrtvovano spašavalo sve što se moglo spasiti. (Povijesni arhiv, Celje)

professional healthcare units: surgical department with a specialist outpatient clinic for external patients, internal medicine department, department of gynaecology and obstetrics with a maternity home, ophthalmologic department, department of otorhinolaryngology, department of dermatology with a specialist outpatient clinic and dispensary for venereal diseases, department of infectious diseases with a specialist outpatient clinic, paediatric department, pulmonary department, and neuropsychiatric department [11,12]. In 1959, the Novo Celje specialist hospital for tuberculosis, the newly established neuropsychiatric department in Vojnik and Celje Hospital were joined as a unified Celje General Hospital. It was envisaged that such a unified hospital would more rapidly develop specialist outpatient and inpatient activity. In 1970 the Novo Celje unit was closed, and the pulmonary and internal B department were moved to the hospital in Topolšica, which was joined to the Celje General Hospital [5,11,12].

Following the Constitution of 1974 and the Associated Labour Act, the Celje hospital became a Celje General Hospital Labour Organisation

with four basic organisations of associated labour (TOZDs): TOZD medical departments in Celje, Vojnik-Ravne Neuropsychiatry TOZD, Topolšica Labour Unit TOZD, and Common Service and Supply Unit TOZD. The system of healthcare organisations and health insurance was joined to a unified system of health protection. In 1976, the Topolšica Labour Unit TOZD was separated from the Celje General Hospital Labour Organisation [5,11].

On the other hand, the result of efforts for a different merger was the establishment of a combined organisation of associated labour (SOZD), *Združeni zdravstveni zavodi Celje* (Celje Associated Healthcare Institutions). In practice this SOZD never really flourished, since already in 1978 a Celje Health Centre, which no longer included the Brežice hospital, was established. The Celje Health Centre combined 22 TOZDs and a labour collective of common services. It covered the wider Celje region with comprehensive health protection ranging from inpatient, preventive and hygienic-epidemiological to specialist activity. In practice, several disadvantages appeared; thus another reorganisation of healthcare organisation units took place – the number of TOZDs was decreased [6,13].

New urban plans were aimed at rescuing the whole health and social complex in the area between Gregorčičeva, Oblakova and Kersnikova streets and Glazija. After 1973, they again started thinking of complete modernisation and expansion of the hospital. The result was a concept for building the hospital adopted in 1976. In order to implement this concept, three partnership agreements on pooling assets for the modernisation of the hospital were signed in 1986. In 1986 the first, newly built part of hospital units, a part of the specialist outpatient wing of the polyclinic, was opened. Three years later, the neurology department was moved to the new building from Vojnik, and the department of clinical radiology followed a year later. The department of infectious diseases also acquired a new adjacent building [5,7].

In 1988, a vote in favour of the merger of the dispersed activities into one basic organisation, Celje Hospital, was cast. The formation of the Celje Hospital TOZD was finished at the end of 1988. Within the framework of modernisation (1977–1990), the hospital acquired new medical equipment and modern medical devices.

By the end of 1992, the Celje hospital operated within the framework of the Celje Primary Healthcare Centre as a “hospital organisation unit”. At the time, two independent institutions performing hospital activity



Formal opening of the first part of the specialist and outpatient block of the polyclinic in 1986. (Celje General Hospital)

*Svečano otvaranje prvoga dijela specijalističko-ambulantnoga bloka Poliklinike 1986.
(Opća bolnica Celje)*

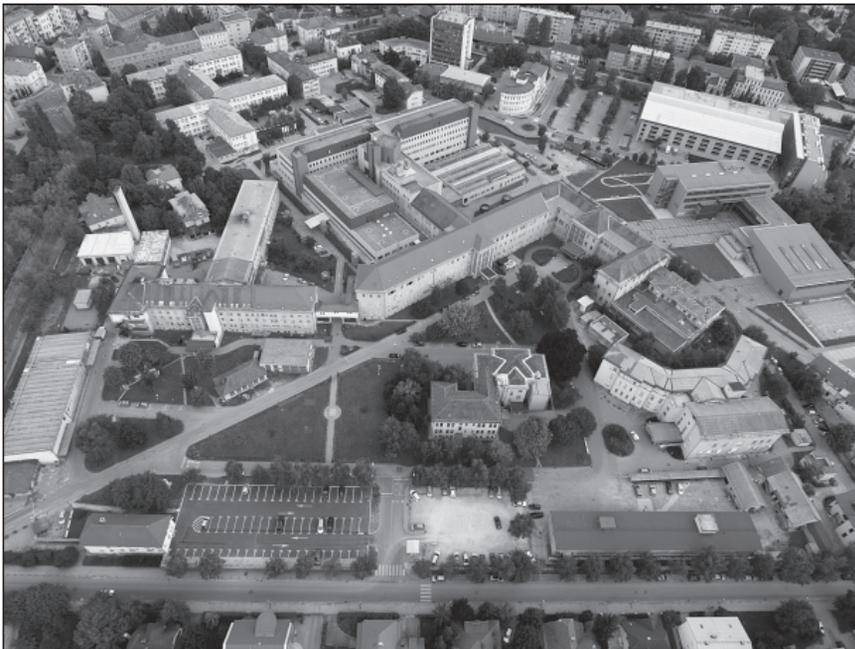
emerged from the reorganisation of the Celje Primary Healthcare Centre: Vojnik Psychiatric Hospital Public Institute and Celje General Hospital (CGH) Public Healthcare Institute. The founder and owner became the state and the institute's council became the highest administrative authority. At that time, CGH had 846 patient beds and its target consumers were 250,000 inhabitants of the wider Celje region. It was predominantly an emergency hospital [5].

After Slovenia's independence, the investment steps were gradual; however, they never stopped completely. The new modernisation of the hospital was initiated by the Act on Investments in Public Healthcare Institutions, which included CGH among the preferential investments. This was followed by difficult years with regard to finance. By amending the statute in 1996, CGH became a teaching institution carrying out practical training for students of healthcare secondary schools and faculties; medical departments and services became the providers of healthcare activity, and the managerial function was divided between the director of the institution and the medical chief-of-staff (since 2001, the medical director) [2].

In 1997, the Department of Medical Research was registered at the Ministry of Science and Technology as an independent research unit. The managerial team started to design a long-term development plan for CGH, which was finished and presented to the public in spring 1998.

A large investment and important development step for the hospital was made in 1997, when a modern surgical wing, EIIM and emergency laboratory were opened in the new part of the hospital. The second-largest investment in the new part of the hospital, a nephrology department with dialysis, came to fruition in 1999. In between, the hospital continued to carry out smaller investments, most of which were the result of donations by companies and civil associations [2].

In these years, CGH proved in different ways that with its operating programme, development of medical disciplines and qualifications of medical staff, it should no longer be categorised as a regional hospital. In 2001, with its candidacy for recognition of a clinical department with a comprehensive management of injuries, which would combine the depart-



Today's Celje General Hospital complex. (Celje Heneral Hospital)

Kompleks Opće bolnice Celje danas (Opća bolnica Celje)

ments of traumatology, physiatry, maxillofacial and oral surgery, plus service for research work and education, it made the first step towards an actual demonstration of its importance.

In 2002 an emergency centre, which was to be developed into an emergency ward according to the Western European model in the following years, opened in CGH. The largest investment of the year went into renovation of the clinical radiology service. In 2004, a new lecture room with modern equipment was opened in the basement of the new part of the hospital. In 2006, the investments were larger again: the hospital acquired a new coronagraph, an X-ray apparatus for invasive cardiac diagnostics, which was mostly paid for by donations [2].

A big organisational change regarding the hospital's operations was brought about by the establishment of the emergency ward, which combined all emergency services in one emergency centre with one point of entry for most emergency examinations. Other outpatient clinics operating at the polyclinic of the hospital were again joined with departments in terms of organisation.

Pursuant to the decision of the Ministry of Health, CGH has operated as a teaching hospital since 1995 and was given more authorisations in 2006 due to the new decision. It thus organises and carries out practice for secondary school and university students and internship for trainees in medicine, nursing care, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, laboratory biomedicine, pharmacy, clinical radiology, etc.

Today, CGH continues with the renovation activities: old, non-functional buildings will be gradually removed from the hospital complex and replaced by new premises. Therefore, the rebuilding of the emergency wing with a new entrance and its upbuilding with four department floors are planned.

Celje General Hospital commemorated its 120-year jubilee with a comprehensive and rich monograph, and the Museum of Recent History Celje brought the spirit of the past into the hospital: the walls of the lecture room are enriched with the exhibition *From an Almhouse to a Modern Hospital* and the *Images from the Hospital's Past* are displayed at the main entrance and in the hall of the hospital.

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SAŽETAK

Put koji je prije 120 godina doveo do službenog otvorenja celjske bolnice, svoje korijene ima u srednjovjekovnom građanskom „špitalu“. Dugogodišnja zalaganja za institucionalizaciju bolničkog liječenja konačno su 1887. urodila plodom: novu Gizelmu bolnicu, nazvanu po carevoj kćeri, svečano je otvorio prestolonasljednik, nadvojvoda Rudolf.

Od osnivanja nadalje, osim suočavanja s načinima liječenja i rukovođenja, izmjenama načina financiranja, kao i poteškoćama poput npr. poplava, u bolnici je zaživjela njezina temeljna vrijednost, skrb za bolesne. Odražavala se radom liječnika, medicinskih sestara i njegovateljica te drugog osoblja; takav odnos zdravstvenog osoblja prema bolesnicima s godinama je povećao povjerenje u bolnicu. A okolica je to povjerenje znala vraćati; pa i onda kada je najprije podržala projekt širenja, a poslije i modernizacije bolnice, koji još uvijek traje.

Danas Opća bolnica Celje zauzima važno mjesto u sustavu slovenskoga javnog zdravstva: kao treća najveća bolnica u Sloveniji ima oko 1.600 zaposlenika, godišnje se u okviru cjelokupnog bolničkog liječenja u njoj liječi 35.000 bolesnika, a u okviru specijalističko-ambulantnog liječenja 260.000 bolesnika. U razdobljima rasta u bolnici su se razvila gotovo sva stručna medicinska područja. Danas se zalažu za stjecanje statusa kliničke bolnice, jačanje istraživačke djelatnosti, ukratko za stalno unapređivanje kvalitete. U tome duhu zvuči i slogan koji su zaposlenici celjske bolnice zapisali kao svoju misiju: Posvećenost životu.

Ključne riječi: povijest medicine, XIX. i XX. stoljeće, bolnice, Celje, Slovenija