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THE PHARMACY HERITAGE IS ALL AROUND US

LJEKARNIČKA BAŠTINA JE SVUD OKO NAS

Pharmacy is undoubtedly an important part of the health and cultural identity of civilisation, and pharmacists are among those most responsible for extending the life expectancy of the population and raising the standard of health. In the past, pharmacies were not only places where medicines were prepared for patients, but also places with a special atmosphere where intellectuals gathered. Certainly undeservedly, but nowadays, the perception of the pharmaceutical industry is negative among the general population. To change this, places like pharmacy museums and medicine museums, as well as professional journals like this, where one can find out many details about how pharmacies and pharmacists have served people throughout the past and continue to do so today, are playing a role.

Fortunately, the heritage related to the history of pharmacy is rich. Starting from ancient mortars or Egyptian scrolls on medicine and pharmacy, through the first medieval pharmacopoeias to modern pharmacy bottles (stands), medicine boxes or prescriptions, and more modern machines. It is interesting to note that materials related to pharmacy are kept in various types of museums. Understandably, such materials are most often kept in specialised museums of medicine and pharmacy; however, objects related to pharmacy can often be found in other museums. In general museums, pharmacy objects belong to pharmacy collections or to collections of everyday life, while, for example, stands, often real small masterpieces, can also be found in museums of arts and crafts.

One of the museums specialised in the history of pharmacy is the JGL Pharmacy Museum in Rijeka. This special museum was founded in 2020 by the mul-

tinational pharmaceutical company headquartered in Rijeka, Jadran – Galenski Laboratorij. At the time of its founding, the JGL Pharmacy Museum was the only private museum in Croatia recognised by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia and entered in the Register of Public and Private Museums.

The mission of the JGL Pharmacy Museum is to affirm pharmacy as part of our health and cultural identity, a discipline that has historically been a significant factor in the spiritual and economic progress of the city and county, and continues to be so today, and to preserve, protect, and present materials related to the rich history of pharmacy in Rijeka and Croatia.

The museum's mission is also to actively participate in the life of the local community as a place of meeting, learning, and entertainment, especially for the younger generation. The museum must also emphasise the importance of health, to which pharmacy significantly contributes; therefore, it must have a general dimension in its foundations and remind visitors of the importance of the profession. One of the primary motives for establishing the JGL Pharmacy Museum is its educational activities, primarily aimed at students of pharmacy schools and pharmacy students from all over Croatia, as well as at every visitor to the museum.

The importance of preserving the heritage related to the history of pharmacy, as well as medicinal plants, has brought together various European museums, universities, tourist boards, botanical gardens and the like in the Aromas Itinerarium Salutis (AIS) organisation, which launched the European Route of Historic Pharmacies and Medicinal Gardens project. The cooperation of more than 50 members of this association from 13 European countries has led to great success. In September 2024, the European Route of Historic Pharmacies and Medicinal Gardens earned a prestigious certificate from the Council of Europe and became an official Cultural Route of the Council of Europe.

This block presents three articles that explore the history of pharmacy and medicine in Portugal, Poland, and the Croatian island of Cres.

In her article, Dr Paula Basso provides an overview of the organised fight of the Portuguese services against the spread of AIDS from 1983 and the first appearance of HIV infection in Portugal until the end of the 20th century. This is a comprehensive and well-prepared article, in which the author has thoroughly reviewed available documentation, including both archival and media sources. Also interesting is the information that Dr Basso pointed out about the connection between political and social events and the growth of drug addiction and the number of people infected with HIV. Portugal has come a long way from initially ignoring the disease and a large number of new infections to a situation in which

Portugal has become an example for other countries on how to fight HIV infection. Of particular relevance to this topic is the fact that pharmacies and pharmacists throughout Portugal played an important role in combating the spread of the disease.

Authors Wojciech Ślusarczyk and Łukasz Pigoński have thoroughly and with a substantial amount of data covered the topic of the history of pharmacy museums in Poland, from the initial initiatives at the end of the 19th century through the turbulent events of the last century and up to the present day. I would like to highlight one sentence from the article: *"It is not an easy task to define what exactly a pharmacy museum is."* Pharmacy museums are a combination of historical pharmacies, connections with the local community, a connection with medicine, mostly initiated by individual enthusiasts, and the necessity for such museums to be aligned with modern museology. It is interesting to gain insight into how the nationalisation of pharmacies in Poland after World War II even had a positive impact on the preservation of rich materials related to the history of pharmacy. The authors also provide an overview of the establishment of pharmacy museums in Europe over the past hundred years.

The topic of the third work by Croatian authors is pharmacy on Cres, an island in the Adriatic Sea, or more precisely, in the largest town of the same name on that island. Cres has a heritage spanning over five centuries of pharmacy tradition, which is exceptional. Rarely did any town have a pharmacy in the 16th century, while Cres had two run by trained pharmacists at the time. Researching the history of pharmacy in the Kvarner region is quite complicated. However, in the case of Cres, the research is facilitated by the preserved minutes of the City Council of the *"Magnificent Municipality of Cres"*, and it is particularly interesting that a list of local pharmacists can be traced back as far as five centuries.

As the authors rightly note, researching the history of pharmacy is highly demanding and challenging; however, it is precisely through the work of pharmacies that socio-political movements can be traced. This can be seen in the example of Cres, where pharmacists were initially municipal employees, then became private individuals in the 19th century, and in the middle of the last century, pharmacies were nationalised.