

PSYCHIATRIC SATURDAY IN MOSTAR: THE TORCHBEARER OF MOSTAR ACADEMIC MEDICINE

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INTRODUCTION

Almost eleven years ago, towards the end of year 2003, the idea for organizing an international psychiatric symposium in Mostar came into mind of Prof. Miro Jakovljević, the head of the Department of Psychiatry at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Mostar. It happened in perfect time, in the time when, thanks to the Faculty of Medicine in Mostar, a vast number of physicians, including a lot of psychiatrists, was highly interested in science and scientific careers. The idea was to select an interesting and modern topic in psychiatry and to explore and present it as good as possible. The plan that we put forward was to restore and encourage cooperation and creativity in the post-war Mostar through this psychiatric symposium by exchanging and complementing knowledge and bringing together prominent experts and scientists from all over Bosnia and Herzegovina and neighbouring countries. That was our essential aim. We planned to invite mental health professionals as well as other physicians and intellectuals interested in psychiatry. Prof. Miro Jakovljević came up with the idea, while we, the younger colleagues from the Department, were initially a bit sceptical, reluctant, even pessimistic. We were having doubts in the manner typical for Mostar dwellers: „We - to organize a psychiatric symposium?! You must be joking!“.

PSYCHIATRIC SATURDAY IN MOSTAR: A START DESPITE EVERYTHING

At the beginning of year 2004, the impetus coming from the distinguished professor from Zagreb, we set up the Organizing Committee of the Symposium, came up with a topic, selected and invited the speakers, provided the venue. The plan became reality on June the 3rd 2004: in Croatian Cultural Center *Herceg Stjepan Kosača* the symposium *The First Psychiatric Saturday* in Mostar took place. It got its name following the example of a symposium in some Western countries. The topic was *Personality, Anxiety and Depression in Modern Medicine and Psychiatry*. The speakers were distinguished university professors from Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Croatia: Prof. Miro

Jakovljević and Prof. Vlado Jukić from Zagreb, Prof. Goran Dodig from Split, Prof. Osman Sinanović from Tuzla, Prof. Marija Burgić Radmanović from Banja Luka, Prof. Abdulah Kučukalić from Sarajevo... Prof. Jakovljević was offering also to us, the colleagues from Mostar, to participate but we were not brave enough. We did not have the self-confidence and thought we did not deserve it. Bearing in mind the fact that this was not just the very first psychiatric Saturday in Mostar but also the very first psychiatric symposium in Bosnia and Herzegovina in general, we were highly troubled about the audience and the number of the listeners. Nobody had organized anything similar before, not even on a Monday, nor on a Tuesday, nor on a Wednesday... The symposium brought together approx. 70 listeners, naturally more than ever before. We were happy and satisfied and immediately decided to organize also the second psychiatric Saturday the following year and to try to make this event a traditional one.

The Second Psychiatric Saturday was held on June the 4th 2005 in the additional facilities of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Mostar, with the topic *Metabolic Syndrome X and Psychological Medicine*. This highly interesting and modern, for us also very new topic was, in addition to the important professors from the region, presented by the Head of our Department of Psychiatry, Prof. Miro Jakovljević, as well as by the author of these lines, Boris Maslov, M.Sc., and Marko Martinac, M.D., all five the members of the Department of Psychiatry at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Mostar. Subsequently we got from the Federal Ministry of Science financial aid for two projects concerning Metabolic Syndrome with psychiatric patients. We also completed several M.Sc. thesis and PhDs in this field. This has resulted in numerous papers being published in high impact journals as well as in active participation in regional, but also in European and world congresses.

The following year we were a bit more courageous – we organized the 3rd Psychiatric Saturday in Mostar at the Hotel *Ero*, on June the 8th 2006. The topic was *Agression: A Tragic Social Medical Phenomenon*. Later all other *Saturdays* were held at the same hotel whose hall can seat 200 listeners. In all the subsequent years the hall was full. The 4th Psychiatric Saturday in Mostar was held on June the 2nd 2007 – *New Ideas and Concepts in Modern Medicine and Psychiatry*; the 5th

Saturday – on June the 14th 2008 with the topic *Spirituality in Modern Medicine and Psychiatry*. The first several Saturdays were organized alone by the Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine, University of Mostar, whereas later the Clinic for Psychiatry, Clinical University Hospital Mostar, joined with the co-organization of the Psychiatric Association of Bosnia and Herzegovina (PABH).

A EUROPEAN CONGRESS IN PSYCHIATRY IN MOSTAR

Thanks to the experience gathered in the organization of the five previous Saturdays, the positive feedback for the organizers, as well as with some luck, we received an offer to organize in Mostar a regional European mental health congress. We did that too – with a lot of pain and effort. The 23rd Danube Psychiatry Symposium on the topic *Brave New Integrative Psychiatry: From Early Recognition to Successful Treatment* was held in Mostar from the 5th till 8th October 2008. The congress gathered more than 200 participants from 11 countries from Europe and Africa. All members of our Department of Psychiatry actively participated in this regional European congress showing our strength and the place we occupy in modern academic psychiatry, positively promoting Mostar academic psychiatry in this part of Europe.

THREE MEMBERS OF ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND ARTS AT THE 8TH PSYCHIATRIC SATURDAY IN MOSTAR

The 6th Saturday was held on June 6th 2009 on the topic *Comorbidity of Mental and Physical Disorders*, the 7th Saturday on June the 26th 2010 on the topic *Psychosomatic Medicine: When the Soul speaks Through the Body*. The 8th Psychiatric Saturday came into being on June 25th 2011 with the topic *Ethics and Morality Disorders in Modern Medicine and Society*.

The interest for the Psychiatric Saturdays in Mostar was growing rapidly, both with listeners and with potential speakers. The Saturdays had usually featured tenish talks, whereas the 8th Saturday had 15 speakers. The active participants of the 8th Psychiatric Saturday in Mostar were also three members of the Academies of Sciences and Arts – Academician Dušan Kecmanović from Australia, Academician Slobodan Loga from Sarajevo and Academician Vladimir Premec from Sarajevo, as well as two young students from the faculty

of Medicine, University of Mostar, Mia Blažević and Katarina Hrkač, who briefly reported on the results of an interesting research on the ethics of medical students conducted at our Faculty.

The 9th Psychiatric Saturday in Mostar was held on June the 9th 2012 on the topic *Psychotraumatology and Stress Medicine: Modern Concepts*; the 10th Saturday on June the 8th 2013 on the topic *Professionalism in Modern Medicine and Society*. The last, the 11th Saturday, took place on June the 14th 2014 on the topic *Placebo and Nocebo: Between Ritual, Religion and Medicine*. Already now we have the idea that the topic of the 12th Psychiatric Saturday could be *Psychiatry and Philosophy...* The speakers at Saturdays are distinguished professors, mostly from Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Croatia, but also from Serbia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Germany, Great Britain, Australia.

CONCLUSION

So far, in these 11 Saturdays, we have featured, through the excellent moderating of Academician Slobodan Loga, eleven modern topics. We have had 135 different conference talks on the basis of which three books have been written (the Senate of the University of Mostar has declared them to be university textbooks) plus three chapters in the journal of *Matrix Croatica Motrišta*. We have had approx. 100 – 200 listeners each year. The Symposium is held under the auspices of pharmaceutical companies. Conference fee is not being charged, the participants can listen to the talks, enjoy a buffet, and they get the certificate of attendance.

In the opinion of the President of PABH the Psychiatric Saturday in Mostar has become one of the most prominent events in BH psychiatry. Each year the number of speakers from our Department of Psychiatry has been larger, our talks better and more noted. Also the invitations to our members of the Department to be invited lecturers at the psychiatric events in the region have become more and more frequent. The number of scientific papers and review articles that are being published is growing. Having in mind all the positive facts that have come up, we can say with a reason that the Psychiatric Saturday in Mostar was and is the torchbearer of Mostar academic medicine.

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