

In memoriam

Prof. Dr. Spira Strahinjić (1925-2022)



With great sadness we received the news that Prof. Dr. Spira Strahinjić, our teacher, retired full professor of the Medical Faculty in Nis, founder and longtime director of the Institute of Nephrology and Dialysis, passed away on January 25th, 2022 in Niš.

He had a very challenging but not very easy life. He was born in a poor family on January 25th, 1925 in the village of Orane near Bojnik, Leskovac. He received his primary education in the village and finished high school in Leskovac in 1946. Being graduated from the Faculty of Medicine in Belgrade in 1953, he specialized in internal medicine at the same faculty in 1960. During his specialization in 1961/62, he studied in Strasbourg and then in Bern.

He has been working at the Medical Faculty in Nis since 1960, and until 1972 he was the head of the Cardiology department at the Internal Clinic of the General Hospital. During that time, he launched an initiative to establish an Institute of Nephrology. By the decision of the Faculty of Medicine, the Institute of Nephrology was established on January 13, 1972 and he was appointed the first director. He remained in that position until his retirement in 1990. The organization of the Institute was unique in Yugoslavia and beyond,

because under "one roof" clinical and basic medicine worked together. As the director of the Institute of Nephrology, he had a clear vision of its development, and he carried it out with great love for the benefit of thousands and thousands of patients, as well as the doctors at the Institute. He used to say 'even one day of life is life' which indicates his dedication to most difficult patients.

As a legate, Professor Strahinjić left numerous dialysis institutions that he established in the region of Serbia, Kosovo and Montenegro. He was among the first doctors to describe a new, hitherto unknown disease, endemic nephropathy, which occurred not only in Serbia but also in the surrounding Balkan countries. His scientific work, which includes over 400 publications in national and international journals, was widely recognized and quoted thus spreading the reputation of Serbian nephrology and nephrologists not only in the Balkans region but also in Europe and around the world. His perhaps most precious legacy are his students, doctors and followers. Numerous doctoral students have made significant scientific contributions under his mentorship. He selflessly cared about the training of his associates and always emphasized knowledge as the most important part of medicine.

Today, when we remember him with reverence, it is difficult to list all his professional, scientific and teaching contributions. Under his leadership, the Institute of Nephrology became one of the most prestigious institutions in former Yugoslavia. He started training his staff for the transplant program in Lyon and Paris, and in 1979 he successfully led the first living kidney transplantation performed by surgeons from Nis under the leadership of professor Di Bernard and his team from Lyon. He organized regular annual seminars, symposia and workshops in various fields of nephrology: endemic nephropathy, dialysis, transplantation, which were very well attended by participants all over former Yugoslavia. The most of the Meetings were organized in association with leading nephrologists of the Balkans and the world.

Professor Strahinjić was a favorite figure among nephrologists in Yugoslavia and the Balkans. Everyone respected his great work aimed at the development of, at that time, young branch of medicine-nephrology. He is one of the pioneers and founders of both Serbian Society

of Nephrology and the Faculty of Medicine in Nis, where he was the head of the Department of Internal Medicine for many years. He is also one of the founders of the Medical Academy of Serbian Medical Society and president of its branch for southeastern Serbia. Together with leading nephrologists from the region, he was the founder and supporter of BANTAO. He was a member of EDTA, ISN, and many other medical associations.

As his associates and followers, we are proud to have learned from him, and we are grateful that he provided us with support during our work and enabled us to improve in prestigious institutions around the world. It taught us how to fight for 'every second of human life'.

Professor Strahinjic received many recognitions for his work: the SLS Lifetime Achievement Award, the City

of Niš Award, the 7th July Award of Serbia, and the Order of Labor with a Red Star.

His life and work should be an example to young people of how to love and practice medicine, and how to invest in future generations. As very loyal as a husband to his wife Lenka, his daughter Cica and granddaughter Tijana, he served as an example of how to get inspiration in a family full of love, from which he drew support and understanding for successful work in medicine and a personal life.

We will remember him as a creator, an extraordinary organizer, a scientist, a teacher, the founder of nephrology, and above all as a wonderful man with a big heart.

Prof. Dr. Vidojko Gjorgjevic
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