

Prof. Stanko Hernja, M.D., Ph.D. (1918-2002)



The life and career of Professor Stanko Hernja, of a distinguished and renowned radiologist, teacher at the School for Health Professionals, Chairman of the Chair of Radiology at the University of Ljubljana and Head of the Institute of Radiology of Ljubljana, ended on 26 April 2002, at the age of eighty-four years.

Professor Hernja was born in 1918 in Ptuj, in Slovenia. He was attending medical schools in Ljubljana (Slovenia), Zagreb (Croatia) and Graz (Austria). When the Second World War broke out he made a break in his studies and joined the liberation front. He was awarded Medical Doctor's Degree at the Medical Faculty of the

University of Zagreb (Croatia) in 1947. In 1948, after the completed internship, he was employed at the Clinical Hospitals of Ljubljana; the same year, he was appointed Physician Assistant. He was the first Teaching Assistant to Professor Josip Hebein at the Chair of Radiology. In 1952, he passed the Board Exam in Radiology. After having presented his thesis entitled »Up-to-Date Imaging Diagnostics of the Disorders in the Mediastinum«, he was appointed Assistant Professor in 1961 and Associate Professor in 1967. From 1961 onwards, he conducted and supervised the specialization in radiology. In 1973, he completed his doctorate on »X-Ray of Pulmonary Arteries and Circulation with a Special Stress on the Diagnostics and Differentiation of Neoplasms in the Chest« and was awarded a PhD and, in 1974, elected Full Professor of Radiology. In 1976, he was nominated Head of the Department of Gastroenterologic Diagnostics and three years later received the title of Senior Adviser.

He specialized particularly in imaging diagnostics of the chest and gastrointestinal tract and ionising irradiation protection. Together with his colleagues, he tried and introduced several new diagnostic methods. His bibliography comprises numerous technical and medical writings, including papers and articles published in local medical journals as well as foreign ones. He participated in editing the terminology dictionary issued by Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Art and also published a number of revisions of medical books in *Acta Medica* and *Radiologia Iugoslavica*. He attended many international

meetings as speaker or lecturer and also organized a number of such events at home and abroad.

In his long and fruitful career, he visited many radiology centers in the world; he saw the centers in Stockholm, Hamburg and Koeln in the years from 1954 to 1956, and from 1968 to 1970 more such centers in the Netherlands and West Germany, and from 1968 to 1970, in addition to the centers in the Netherlands and Germany that he visited again, he also went to see such centers in Belgium and U.S.A.

These visits and contacts with the experts in radiology abroad were valuable for his personal growth, for his professional improvement, as well as in his endeavors to reorganize the work at the National Institute of Radiology and university courses at the Chair of Oncology.

In the years between 1959 and 1960, he was Chairman of the Radiology and Nuclear Medicine Section of Slovenian Medical Association, from 1960 to 1961, he was Secretary of the Section, and from 1961 to 1964, he was appointed President of Radiology and Nuclear Medicine Association of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia and was one of the founders and, for several years, also member of the editorial board of the medical journal »Radiologia Iugoslavica«. He received several prizes and awards in recognition of his highly professional work, among them also the Order of Merits with Golden Laureate for Life Work.

In order to rank Professor Hernja with other distinguished Slovenian radiologists, his numerous achievements listed above would undisputably meet the requirements. Eventually, his contributions to the development of radiology in Slovenia are far beyond these accomplishments and include also his assignments and nominations, such as Director of the Institute of Radiology at the University Medical Centre Ljubljana from 1961 to 1973, Chairman of the Chair of

Radiology at the Medical Faculty Ljubljana from 1961 to 1981. Holding both these positions, he could add specific value to and had an important impact on further development of our specialty and, at the same time, proved himself to have excellent organizational and pedagogical skills.

Professional and technical progress of the Institute was carried out under the strong influence of new knowledges and experiences that Professor Hernja acquired during his visits of similar institutions in Nordic countries. At that time, a model of centralized radiology institute was being set up that served as a base for initiating an advanced concept of subspecialty in radiology. In line with Professor Hernja's concept and under his guidance, new departments were set up and radiology services were centralized. Within the years from 1967 to 1973, Professor Hernja with his co-workers was engaged in designing and construction of a new central institute. (A year earlier, i.e. in 1966, he was appointed Member of the Construction Committee that was in charge of building a new medical center in Ljubljana). In 1973, with the new premises of the Institute completed and settled-in, the long process of centralization of radiology services, following the model of other centers worldwide, was also concluded. These were and still appear to be firm foundations for further development and technical progress of radiology in Slovenia.

In his position of Professor and Chairman of the Chair of Radiology and that of Chairman of the Department of Radiology at the School for Health Professionals (1967-1980), he brought up several generations of students of medicine, stomatology, and radiology, and engineers of radiology, and provided them with rich and extensive knowledge. His most valid achievement in the educational area is that radiology is taught in the fourth academic year (7th and 8th semester) and that it is now ranged among major read-

ing subjects at the Medical Faculty in which an examination has to be passed. Professor Hernja issued the first course book on radiology and later on, in cooperation with his colleagues, a textbook on radiology.

The greatness of a teacher is reflected in his pupils. Sincerity and kindheartedness towards his students paved the way for their professional growth and creativity if only they wished and had capabilities to make any improvement. Professor Hernja was pleased to have the chance to pursue the development and personal growth of his four colleagues who were elected full professors and who successfully continued his work after his retirement. In 1981, he decided to retire and

thus concluded his fruitful and successful career.

We departed from Professor Hernja, an eminent Slovenian radiologist with great sadness in our hearts. We feel greatly obliged to him for what he did for radiology in Slovenia and for medical science in general. We shall hold him in fond remembrance as a valuable personality who moved forward the landmarks of Slovenian radiology, as an eminent expert in radiology and as a kind and caring tutor of several generations of medical specialists and engineers in radiology.

Vladimir Jevtič