

# One Hundred Years of Dermatovenereology in the Serbian Army

Miroslav Ž. DINIĆ\*, Lidija KANDOLF-SEKULOVIĆ, Radoš D. ZEČEVIĆ

Department of Dermatology and Venereology, Military Medical Academy, Belgrade, Serbia

\*Correspondence: Miroslav Ž. DINIĆ, E-mail: miroslavdinic@hotmail.com

616.5+616.97]:355.721(497.11)(091)



## Abstract

One hundred years of dermatovenereology of the Serbian Army was celebrated on November 7, 2009, in the amphitheatre of the *Military Medical Academy (MMA)*. The oldest document in possession of the *Serbian Armed Forces Medical Services* is dated on St. George's Day, May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1869 and represents a "Daily report of military hospitals". This document clearly shows the number of patients, and what they suffered from. Moreover, this document shows, among other things, how many patients were suffering from "venereal diseases, red wind, mechanical injuries, base wounds, ulcers, lichen and mange". Until 1909, the *Department of Dermatovenereology* did not exist as an independent. Today, the Clinic has 2 divisions (a total of 36 beds), as well as the *Laboratory for immunodermatology, Surgical unit, General Dermatology Outpatient Clinic, Allergology Section, Phototherapy Section, Dermoscopy and Melanoma Outpatient Clinic*. The Clinic is the leader in the treatment of psoriasis, autoimmune skin diseases (pemphigus, pemphigoid), severe forms of atopic dermatitis, erythroderma, skin lymphomas and cutaneous manifestations of connective tissue diseases (lupus, dermatomyositis, scleroderma), and a dermatologic oncology section is being developed, where systemic therapy of melanoma and follow-up of these patients will be done. Regarding the vision of the future, the main task of the Clinic is to ensure continuous improvement in the field of dermatology in Serbia. The plan is to develop the area of photodiagnostics and phototherapy, which are insufficient in the region. Also, further development of dermatological surgery is planned. Further development of Allergology Service is mandatory, as well as establishment of Pediatric Dermatology, Phlebology and Trichology Outpatient Clinic. Continued scientific research is essential for the development of an academic institution and a prerequisite for continuous diagnostic and therapeutic progress, and a permanent pursuit.

## Key words

Dermatology + history; Venereology + history; Hospitals, Military + history; Military Personnel; History, 19th Century

One hundred years of dermatovenereology of the Serbian Army was celebrated on November 7, 2009, in the amphitheatre of the *Military Medical Academy (MMA)*. It was an opportunity to review and remind ourselves of the history of dermatovenereology in the military health care in Serbia.

## Military medicine in Serbia in the 19th century

In 1830, Serbia was recognized by *hatiserif* (Sultan's Edict) and given autonomy under Turkish rule, allowing foundation of hospitals in Serbia. The first Serbian constitution, "*Sretenje Constitution*", was proclaimed in 1835, when Prince Miloš Obenović

founded the first Serbian military units. The Constitution included a paragraph: "Taking care of funds for maintenance of hospitals and soldiers' health ...". Military doctors were employed in the same year, and in 1836, the first military hospitals were founded in Kragujevac and Požarevac, while in the Belgrade district Savamala, a small military hospital unit was founded, which was soon relocated to a part of Palilula Barrack (opposite the present Belgrade Botanical Garden). *Military hospital of Palilula* had "two rooms for patients with mange (scabies)", on the ground floor, and on the first floor a "sickroom for patients with internal conditions, and a room for convalescents". These are the first data showing that

By the Decree of Prince Alexander Karadjordjević, signed on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1844, the first *Central Military Hospital* was established. This Decree represented the beginning of the new period in Serbian military medicine, and this date is still celebrated as the Day of the *Military Medical Academy*. The hospital was built in place of today's Belgrade Flower Square, and it was finished in 1848. *The Military hospital of Palilula* was relocated into the new building. The hospital gradually became a permanent military hospital, the *Danube military hospital* with 150 beds

The oldest document in possession of the *Serbian Armed Forces Medical Services* is dated on St. George's Day, May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1869 and represents a "Daily report of military hospitals". This document clearly shows the number of patients, their gender and rank, if they were in the internal or external department, and what they suffered from. Patients with skin diseases were placed in the Department for external diseases, and this document shows, among other things, how many patients were suffering from "venereal diseases, red wind, mechanical injuries, base wounds, ulcers, lichen and mange" (Figure 1).

[illegible]

34

## Formation of the organized Dermatovenereology Service in the Serbian Army

The *Danube military hospital* facilities eventually became insufficient for the admission of the Danube Division soldiers and troops from other garrisons from Serbia, and a decision was made at the suggestion of the Chief of the Medical Corps, Colonel Dr. Mihajlo Marković, to build a new and bigger hospital in the Belgrade district, Western "Vračar". At that point, on November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1909, the *General Military Hospital* started working (Figure 2). The hospital had 400 beds and several departments: Department of Internal Diseases, where mental patients and patients with infectious diseases were treated, Surgery Department, Eye and Dermatovenereology Departments. The hospital also had a radiographic laboratory and a dental service.

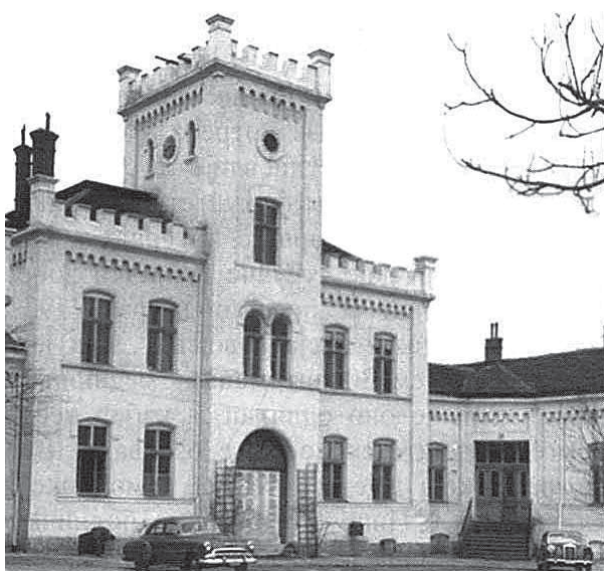
Therefore, until 1909, the *Department of Dermatovenereology* did not exist as an independent Department, but dermatovenereological diseases were treated in the *Danube Military Hospital* at the Department of External Diseases by skin and venereal diseases specialists: 1st class captain Dr. Milutin Pop Jovanović, who was the first Chief of the *Department*

of *Dermatology* of the *General Military Hospital*. Due to his illness in 1911, he was replaced by a 2<sup>nd</sup> class captain Dr. Toma Leko.

During the Balkan Wars and the First World War, the Department was conducted by a reserve lieutenant colonel Dr. Milan Radovanović, who was also the Head of the *General Military Hospital*. Immediately after the First World War, the Department was directed by Major Dr. Božidar Janković, and in 1921, Major Dr. Milivoje Pantić was appointed the Head of the Department, and he kept this position until the beginning of the World War II, when he became a brigadier general. Initially, the Department had 40 beds, and since 1929, 96 beds. Only military personnel were treated at the Department.

During the Second World War, the Department did not work as such, and mostly returnees from nazi camps in Germany were hospitalized. At the end of 1944, *Dermatovenereology Section* of the *Main Military Hospital of the Yugoslav Army* was reopened, headed by Col. Dr. Jezdimir Jovanović. At the beginning of 1946, Major Dr. Miladin Gilić was appointed the Head of the Department. In 1949, the *Main Military Hospital* changed its name to *Military Medical Academy* (MMA), and in 1960 the Section became the *Clinic of dermatology and venereology* of the MMA, where Dr. Miladin Gilić, Head of the Clinic and associate professor, stayed until his retirement in 1963. At that time the Clinic had 60 beds. With a modest inventory, an *Outpatient Allergology Clinic* was established in 1955, and it was directed by Colonel Branislav Hrnjiček. Since 1960, a histopathological laboratory was established and directed by Col. Dr. Slavko Arnerić. Since 1963, the Head of the Clinic was Colonel and Associate Professor Dr. Radovan Krunic. Col. Ass. Prof. Dr Slavko Arnerić was appointed the Head of the Clinic in 1970, and he remained at this position until 1984, when Colonel Professor Dragomir Janković became the Head of the Clinic.

After the formation of MMA, the Clinic included the *Department of Skin Diseases*, *Department of Venereal Diseases*, *Outpatient Ambulance*, *Section for Physical Therapy* and a *Laboratory of Biochemistry*. Since 1972, the Clinic established a *Laboratory of Immunodermatology* (or *Laboratory of Immunopathology*), in which direct and indirect immunofluorescence examinations of the skin



**Figure 2.** The main building of the General Military Hospital, established in 1909 at Western Vračar, Belgrade district



specimens and sera were examined. The Laboratory was commissioned by Colonel Professor Zvonimir Stefanović. There was also a *Therapeutic Dermatology Section* where phototherapy, skin electrosurgery and cryotherapy were performed. Professor Dragomir Janković, Head of the *Therapeutic Dermatology Section* replaced Col. Professor Zvonimir Stefanović in 1992, and since 1994, Col. Professor Đordije Karadaglić became the Head of the Department. In 2000, a capital textbook of dermatovenereology in Serbian language was published, entitled "Dermatology", whose editor was Professor Karadaglić. The textbook was in two volumes, with participation of nearly 50 Serbian and foreign dermatovenereologists and doctors of other specialties, as authors and coauthors. Since 2002, the Head of the Clinic is Colonel Professor Radoš D. Zečević.

### Clinic of Dermatology and Venereology of MMA today

Today, Clinic has 2 divisions (a total of 36 beds), a *Laboratory for immunodermatology*, *Surgical unit*, *General Dermatology Outpatient Clinic*, *Allergology Section*, *Phototherapy Section*, *Dermoscopy and Melanoma Outpatient Clinic*. The Clinic is the leader in the treatment of psoriasis, autoimmune skin diseases (pemphigus, pemphigoid), severe forms of atopic dermatitis, erythroderma, skin lymphomas and cutaneous manifestations of connective tissue diseases (lupus, dermatomyositis, scleroderma), and a dermatologic oncology section is being developed,

where systemic therapy of melanoma and follow-up of these patients will be done.

Annually, about 800 patients are supervised at the Clinic, of which 50% the citizenry. The most common clinical conditions include: psoriasis (11%), hives (10%), melanoma (7.68%), contact dermatitis (7.68%), lupus erythematosus (5.2%), pemphigus/pemphigoid (5.2%) and cutaneous lymphomas (2.6%). The Clinic has a Theatre for dermatosurgery, where biopsies of skin and subcutaneous tissues are performed for diagnostic purposes as well as surgical removal of benign and malignant skin changes, electrosurgery with radiofrequency devices and cryosurgery (liquid nitrogen). On an annual basis, there are about 550 different interventions. The *Laboratory for immunodermatology*, unique in Serbia, uses methods of direct and indirect immunofluorescence, for immunoserological and immunohistological diagnosis (anti-nuclear, anti-mitochondrial, anti-smooth muscle and antiparietal antibodies, antibodies to the basement membrane zone, autoantibodies and pemphigus autoantibodies etc.) – and performs over 1000 analyses per year. In the Outpatient Clinic and its sections, where outpatient examinations are performed, skin ultrasound examinations, Wood's light examinations, dermoscopy, allergy tests with standard and non-standard batteries of allergens, photodynamic therapy and the last generation of radiofrequency and diode laser treatment of leg veins and skin rejuvenation (diode laser) are available,



**Figure 3.** Department of Dermatology of the General Military hospital, Western Vračar, Belgrade district

as well as the the latest generation of photoherapy equipment with narrow band UVB and UVA devices. In the Outpatient Clinic, more than 30.000 patients are examined annually. At the Clinic of Dermatology and Venereology, residency in dermatovenereology is available for military personnel, as well as for civilians, but also specialist trainings for other health centers in immunodermatology.

Ongoing scientific research is done in cooperation with the *Institute for Medical Research of MMA* and *Institute of Pathology and Forensic Medicine* of MMA. Several scientific publications, in the field of connective tissue diseases, cutaneous lymphoma and photodermatology, the present project study of genetic alterations in skin cancers and melanoma, as well as the research project on the subclinical atherosclerosis and metabolic syndrome in patients with psoriasis are under way. So far, the current personnel of the Clinic has published 51 articles in scientific periodicals, out of which nearly two thirds were published in foreign journals.

Every other November, the Clinic is the organizer and the host of the *Belgrade Dermatological Days*, the most important national dermatology meeting, which brings together more than 300 dermatovenereologists from our country and abroad, and once a year it is the organizer and the host of the Meeting of the Dermatovenereology Section of the *Serbian Medical Society*.

### **Clinic of Dermatology and Venereology of MMA – the vision of the future**

Regarding the vision of the future, the main task of the Clinic is to ensure continuous improvement in the field of dermatology in Serbia.

The plan is to develop the area of photodiagnostics and phototherapy, which are insufficient in the region. Also, further development of dermatological surgery is planned, since it is the integral part of dermatology in the USA, and most of the European countries. This will allow more comprehensive monitoring of patients with skin tumors in the diagnosis and treatment.

Development of esthetic dermatology, for which there is a great need in recent years, would offer cosmetic dermatological services, and provide continuous funding of all segments of dermatological services. Further development of Allergology Service is mandatory, as well as establishment of Pediatric Dermatology, Phlebology and Trichology Outpatient Clinic. Continued scientific research is essential for the development of an academic institution and a prerequisite for continuous diagnostic and therapeutic progress, and a permanent pursuit.

Current development of dermatology requires revision of previous plans of specializations, and better training in internal medicine and surgery, which will be tasks in education of new generations of dermatologists.

### **References**

1. Ignjatović M. Formiranje vojne sanitetske službe u Srbiji sredinom XIX veka [Establishment of the military healthcare service in Serbia in the middle of the XIX century]. *Vojnosanit Pregl* 2003;60(4): 509-15.
2. Dnevni raport vojne bolnice od 06. maja 1869. godine [Daily report of the military hospital, May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1869]. Beograd: Vojnosanitetski arhiv Vojske Srbije; 1869.
3. Pantelić D, urednik. Vojnomedicinska akademija JNA: Jubilarna monografija. [Military Medical Academy of the Yugoslav National Army - YNA: An anniversary monograph]. Beograd: Vojnomedicinska akademija; 1985.

## **Sto godina detmatologije u srpskoj vojsci**

### **Sažetak**

Jubilarna godišnjica: U novembru 2009. godine u Vojnomedicinskoj akademiji je obeleženo 100 godina dermatovenereologije u Vojski Srbije. To je bila prilika da se osvrnemo na istorijat dermatovenereologije, pored sagledavanja aktuelnog trenutka i ideja za budućnost. Dan osnivanja: Prvi vojni lekari se raspoređuju u vojnim bolnicama 1835. godine. Odlukom knjaza

Aleksandra Karađorđevića od 02. marta 1844. godine planirano je osnivanje „Vojnog špitalja centralne vojske“, a taj dan se slavi kao dan osnivanja Vojnomedicinske akademije. Na osnovu najstarijeg dokumenta Vojnosanitetskog arhiva „Dnevni raport vojne bolnice“, datiranog na Đurđevdan 1869. godine, bolesnici sa obolelom kožom su smeštani u spoljašnje

odeljenje bolnice, a zabeleženo je i koliko obolelih je bilo od „venerija, crvenog vetra, rana mehaničkih, rana prostih, čireva, uboja, lišja i šuge“.

Kožno-venerično odeljenje: U okviru Opšte vojne bolnice od 1909. godine postoji i samostalno Kožno-venerično odeljenje, čiji je prvi načelnik bio kapetan I klase dr Milutin Pop Jovanović. Odeljenje je radilo i tokom Balkanskih ratova i Prvog svetskog rata, a posle Drugog svetskog rata ponovo se otvara Kožno-venerično odeljenje Glavne vojne bolnice Jugoslovenske armije. Odeljenje prerasta u Kliniku za kožne i polne bolesti VMA 1960. godine.

Kliniku za kožne i polne bolesti: Od 1972. godine u sastavu Klinike je i Laboratorija za imunopatologiju. Danas, Klinika čiji je načelnik pukovnik profesor dr Radoš D. Zečević, raspolaže sa 2 odeljenja, Laboratorijom za imunodermatologiju

i salom za dermatohirurgiju, uz ambulantu za opštu dermatologiju i alergologiju, fototerapiju, dermoskopiju i ambulantu za melanome. Klinika je lider u lečenju psorijaze, autoimunih buloznih dermatoza, teških oblika atopijskog dermatitisa, eritrodermijskih stanja, kutanih limfoma i kutanih manifestacija sistemskih bolesti vezivnog tkiva, a razvija se i osek dermatološke onkologije. Klinika je osnivač i domaćin Beogradskih dermatoloških dana, najvažnijeg nacionalnog stručnog skupa.

Budući razvoj: Planovi za budućnost uključuju razvoj na polju fotodijagnostike i fototerapije, alergologije, kao i razvoj dermatohirurgije kao integralnog dela dermatologije. U planu je osnivanje ambulanti za pedijatrijsku dermatologiju, flebologiju i trihologiju. Kontinuirani naučno-istraživački rad ostaje kao trajni zadatak.

## Ključne reči

Dermatologija + istorija; Venerologija + istorija; Bolnice, vojna + istorija; Vojno osoblje; Istorija, 19. veka