

The Oldest Croatian Medical Journal

To the Editor. The paper about scientific biomedical journals in Croatia (1), prompted me to add some facts about the very beginnings of medical publishing in Croatia. The authors of the article correctly stated that scientific publishing has a long tradition in Croatia, mentioning that the *Liječnički vjesnik* (1877) and *Periodicum Biologorum* (1886) have been published for over 100 years. The permanence of the *Liječnički vjesnik*, issued under the auspices of the Croatian Medical Association, makes it a medical journal with the longest tradition in Croatia. However, it is not the oldest medical journal in our country – *Glasnik Društva slavonskih liečnika*, which was not mentioned at all, appeared shortly before the *Liječnički vjesnik*.

The oldest Croatian medical journal was named *Slovinski prvenci o naravi i zdravlju* (Fig. 1), and launched in 1860 in Vienna (2), where its editor, a retired physician and writer, Gjuro Augustinović (Glina, 1816 – Zagreb, 1870) lived. Vladimir Dugački first drew attention to this historical fact in 1977 (3). However, this topic has not been elaborated further, and data about the first medical journal in Croatia remained largely unfamiliar to broader medical audience.

After earning a degree in philosophy in Zagreb (1833-1835), Augustinović (as a reformer of orthography based on phonetic principles, he preferred to write his name as Agustiniović) went to Vienna, where he started medical studies at the Austrian Military Medical Academy (Josephinum), and graduated on 26 July 1844 (4). Nomenclature in medicine, as the closest association between medicine and semantics, was his main interest. His inaugural dissertation entitled "Kurzgefasste topographische Anatomie und Versuch einer illirischen Terminologie der Anatomie" (Dissertatio inauguralis sistens brevem conspectum anatomiae topographicae cum adnexa terminologia anatomiae illyrica, quam consensu et auctoritate illustrissimi ac magnifici domini praesidis et directoris nec non clarissimum ac celeberrimum D.D. Professorum), at the Imperial Royal Medico-Surgical Academy (Josephina) in Vienna, was the first attempt of systematization of the Croatian medical terminology (5). To each anatomical term listed in his dissertation he added, in parenthesis, an expression in the Illyric language. He signed himself as Georgius Augustinović, Ilirus Glinensis, Alumnus confinium croatico-banaliū, although, in the dedication, he called himself Gjuro A. The original dissertation bore a Latin title and was dated "die 7. Kalendas Augusti 1844 hora 12", which does not correspond to August 7th, as usually quoted, but to July 26 (K. Holubar, Vienna

Institute for the History of Medicine, personal communication). Interestingly, the headings and terms were in German, Latin, and Croatian, whereas the text only in German ().

As he maintained an equally strong interest in medicine and philology throughout his life, his medical military service paralleled his philological investigations in which he paid special attention to the Illyric language, grammar, and script. In his treatise, *Misli o ilirskom pravopisu s tablicom glagliski i cirilski slova* (Thoughts on Illyrian Grammar with Tables of Glagolitic and Cyrillic Alphabet), which was published in Vienna in 1846 (6), he distinguished 4 types of alphabets: Glagolitic, Cyrillic, main European alphabet (used in Croatia), and a form of Cyrillic script (used in Serbia). This topic he developed further during his service in Zadar, where he was appointed as a military physician in 1847. This was the period when Croatian national revival, with the typical 19th century notions on popular science, gave a strong impetus to research in various fields and influenced publications and periodicals. Zadar was among the foremost cen-

ters of the liberal Croatian national movement, which aimed to integrate Dalmatia with other parts of Croatia. By the time Augustinović came to this city, *Zora Dalmatinska* (1844-1849), a popular literary journal edited by Ante Kuzmanić (1807-1879), master of surgery and obstetrics, played an outstanding role in promoting the Croatian national identity (7). Although Augustinović had been a follower of the Illyrian movement since his student days, his viewpoints differed radically not only from those of Vuk Stefanović Karadžić, but also from the views of some representatives of the Illyric movement, like Ljudevit Gaj or Ante Kuzmanić (8). Consequently, Augustinović gave his contribution to the *Zora Dalmatinska* only on a single occasion. He did not join the *Slavjanska Lipa*, which gathered patriots around Kuzmanić, but rather joined a group of intellectuals who animated the Illiryan reading-room foundation in Zadar in 1848 (9).

Philological research gradually led to the shaping of Croatian standards on grammar, and scientific and literary terminology was coined throughout the 19th century. Accordingly, professional and technical terminology was discussed, including medicine. Significant involvement of physicians resulted in editing journals or in publishing medical or other texts, which documented the necessity to communicate medical knowledge through journals in the Croatian



Figure 1. The *Slovenski prvenci o naravi i zdravlju* – the oldest Croatian medical journal, launched in Vienna in 1860.

language. However, the first medical journal was launched not on our territory but in Vienna, Austria.

In the first year, six numbers of this journal were issued in 8°(octavo). Five numbers were issued in 1861, when the editor moved from Vienna to Rijeka, and six in the following year. In Rijeka, the journal changed its name to the *Rvacki prvenci o naravi i zdravlju*. Altogether 100 pages of pioneering steps of the first medical journal were issued before Augustinović had to stop publishing, due to financial difficulties. Within three volumes in three years of its existence, the journal published articles on bloodletting method (author's criticism on a still popular therapeutic approach in medicine of that time), and various pieces of advice on medical terminology.

If we compare the very beginnings of Croatian medical journalism with similar tendencies in other European countries, we can see that journals in our area appeared much later than elsewhere. In other European countries this process was shaped by social and intellectual forces as well as scientific discoveries. In the very beginning, it was closely linked to various academies of sciences, which started editing their own journals in as early as the 17th century. Those journals were not primarily medical but brought a miscellany of articles from various scientific fields. The first medical journal in which exclusively medical articles were published was *Acta medica et*

philosophica Hafniensia, edited by Thomas Bartholinus in Copenhagen (10). Although it was published from 1673-1680, it did not attract the attention of broader medical circles. The journal that fulfilled expectations of many practitioners was the French monthly *Journal des decouvertes en medecine*, launched in Paris in 1679. The first medical journals were mostly French. However, during the 18th century, when journalism started to flourish, Germany became the country with the largest number of medical journals issued – around 30 of them (10). In the period when Croatian *Prvenci* was launched, medical journalism was already well established in other European countries. Nevertheless, some of the medical periodicals in European countries, such as *The Lancet* (1823), *New England Journal of Medicine* (then of *Medicine and Surgery*, in 1812), *British Medical Journal* (1857), and *Wiener medizinische Wochenschrift* (1851), were issued only several decades before the *Prvenci* and they all exist in our days. The trend toward specialization of medicine into various medical disciplines, which started in 19th century, was reflected also in the differentiation of journals. Augustinović, as well as most our physicians from that period, was mostly oriented towards journals edited in Austria, such as *Saltzburger medicinische-chirurgische Zeitung*, launched in 1790, or *Wiener medizinische Wochenschrift*. The *Prvenci* and *Wiener medizinische Presse* were launched in the same year.

In its beginnings, Croatian medical journalism was primarily shaped by intellectual efforts of talented individuals, and under influence of political and cultural movements. Before a specific profile of biomedical journals was established, Croatian medical professionals published their papers in daily or other periodicals of various profiles. According to the political situation and the centuries-long struggle for independence and national identity, it is understandable that the launch of new journals was a result of social and political changes at the time, rather than of scientific or professional endeavors. Physicians were often editors of non-medical periodicals, and engaged in different national movements. Medical articles in such journals were mostly oriented toward medical enlightenment of uneducated rural community. The *Prvenci o naravi i zdravlju*, similarly to the pioneering journals in other countries, did not gain popularity or prestige in professional or scientific sense. It is difficult to reveal its impact on the circumstances that led to the launch of the *Glasnik društva slavonskih liečnika* or *Liječnički vjesnik* in 1877. Those processes probably went independently and were not similar in motivation, strategy or organization. Whereas the *Prvenci* was the result of an individual attempt directed primarily toward health education and terminology, *Glasnik društva slavonskih liečnika* and *Liječnički vjesnik*, both issued 17 years later, gradually evolved in response to the foundation of medical societies, changes in the development of medical education, and growing importance of research in the late 19th century.

Augustinović's enthusiastic attempt came at least a decade too early, and was independent of any institutional support. Furthermore, Augustinović did not

have the opportunity to transfer his publishing experience to his successors; by the time when the *Liječnički vjesnik* was launched, he had already died. No such influence could be identified on the pages of Croatian first medical journals in their early periods. However, it is interesting that one of the founders and the first editor of the *Liječnički vjesnik* Ante Schwarz (1832-1880) was also one of the founders of our medical terminology. His textbook *Descriptive Anatomy* (1873-1874), which appeared 30 years after Augustinović's dissertation, was the first medical book using anatomical terms in Croatian language (11).

Both terminology and journalism represent a practical and specific means of communication, and are of utmost importance for medicine. Before the main medical institutions were even founded on Croatian territory and Croatian medical terminology introduced, Augustinović pioneered establishing both. Nevertheless, his efforts remained largely neglected throughout subsequent decades. This paper aimed to emphasize his place and role in the development of Croatian biomedical journalism.

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- 3 Dugački V. Hrvatski prvenci o naravi i zdravlju – naš najstariji zdravstveni časopis. *Liječ vjesn* 1977; 99:94-6.
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