

Obituary

Departure of a Kind and Devoted Man: Jens Dørup, MD, PhD, M.I.L.

A friend has left our small community, gathered around the task to reform medical education in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Prof. Jens Dørup, MD, PhD, M.I.L., was the head of the E-learning unit at the University of Aarhus, Denmark (<http://www.aula.au.dk>), member of the executive board of the Society for the Internet in Medicine, Danish delegate and Board member in the European University Information System (EUNIS), vice chair of the Danish Association for Medical Education, and member of the board for the use of ICT in education at the University of Aarhus. His research interest was broad: digital video and data-driven web pages in medical education, user-centered design of medical learning software, as well cell biology with research on ultra structur-

al studies of distal nephron cells, immunocytochemical localization of transport proteins in re-



nal cells, structural and functional studies of distal nephron intercalated cells, and three-dimensional reconstruction of renal nephrons.

Jens joined our team in 2003, working on the DICTUM (EU Tempus) project, aimed to reform medical education in Bosnia and Herzegovina. All members of the consortium come from different parts of Europe, from the

cold North to hot South, from temperamental Italians to well-mannered Belgians, from merry Irishmen to extremely well organized Germans and Austrians. Even in such a Babylonian environment, Jens was somehow different: quiet, respectful but never distant, arrogant, or patronizing. He showed a marvelous talent for assertive communication with other members of the team. The rest of us have had some disagreements from time to time, but never Jens, who solved all his conflicts in a quiet and sweet way, nevertheless holding firmly to his beliefs. He approached both his work and his colleagues with equal devotion, always being sensitive to their individual and national specificities.

Jens was equally pleasant in private. It was a pleasure to see

the interest he showed in the region where he came to work and how much he enjoyed its beauties. I am grateful I had the opportunity to spend a few of such moments with him and his wife Margarethe (also a medical doctor). On their first visit, we took a short trip to Blagaj, a small village near Mostar, to visit the source of Buna river, the largest karst spring in Europe, and the nearby Islamic shrine (maquam), sacred to the Sufis around the world. Deeply touched by the mystic atmosphere and the cold green water, Jens commented: "If there is a paradise it probably looks like this."

In summer 2004, Jens and Margarethe spent a vacation in Croatia, in a small village of Milna on the island of Vis. They stayed in a fisherman's house on the beach, sometimes sharing meals with the local family, sometimes cooking by themselves. They said they traveled around the world but that this was among their most pleasant experiences.

He told us about his disease over a glass of Heidelberg beer in October 2004, in his typical cold-blooded manner: "You know, guys, after vacation I no-

ted a melanoma on my arm. They removed it, but it has already spread." What to say, how to comment, how to comfort – we were all medical doctors and we knew the meaning and the outcome. In moments like these, one can only put his trust in God and hope that God will not allow anything bad to happen. I told him that he would be in my prayers. We hugged and parted, as I watched him leaving, carrying his unbearable burden along.

Despite his disease, Jens fully participated in the activities related to our project, proving once more his dedication and persistence. During this period, he established an e-learning platform for all medical schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I remember that he once said: "I do not want to be a foreign visitor and a spectator in your country, just having a good time. I really want to do something for you." This was the main principle that guided him in his work. He asked for no praises and rewards, knowing that a successful implementation of one's project is the best reward. He always strived towards the goals that were in the best possible interest of the

community that he was working in and its people, regardless whether it was Denmark or Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Unfortunately the disease could not be stopped. Last time we met in October 2005 in Mostar during the 6th Consortium meeting. He told me that the tumor has spread further. In April 2006, he was not able to attend our annual meeting. I had no courage to imagine how Margarethe and Jens handled the news and the imminent end. I turned to faith and called my Irish friend, Mr. Finbar O'Leary, a devoted catholic and a healer with a worldwide reputation, with hundreds of miraculous, well-documented healings. I asked him for help and he agreed readily. I called Jens and suggested that he contact Mr. O'Leary, and Jens said: "Thank you, Vlado. Tell everybody to pray for me." These were his last words to me. He died on Friday, April 28, 2006 in the arms of his beloved Margarethe. We will remember his sweet manners, golden heart, strong will, and courage in fighting the inevitable.

Vladimir J. Šimunović
vsimunov@public.srce.hr