

SOCIETY OF MEDICAL BIOCHEMISTS OF SERBIA¹

In 2005 the Society of Medical Biochemists of Serbia and Montenegro celebrated 50 years of its existence and work, and on that occasion the IFCC awarded the Society a prize for serving and supporting Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine both in Serbia and Montenegro and globally. For the occasion of the 50th Anniversary, the Society organized the 1st FESCC Symposium for Balkan region (Belgrade, June 2005) on Education, Management and Standards in Laboratory Medicine with important participants from IFCC, FESCC and EC4.

The Society of Medical Biochemists of Serbia (former Yugoslavia – YuSMB) was established in 1955, although medical biochemists (clinical chemists) of Serbia had already joined together in professional associations after the World War II. Even before 1950, the Pharmaceutical Society of Serbia hosted laboratory experts, among whom the most active were Prof. Dr. Aleksandar Damanski in Bromatology, Prof. Dr. Momčilo Mokranjac in Toxicology and Assistant Professor Dr. Pavle Trpinac in Biochemistry. Firstly, the Section for Sanitary Chemistry, combining medical biochemists, sanitary chemists and toxicologists, was founded on January 1st, 1951. Later on this Section grew to become the Serbian Section for Medical Biochemistry, the first President of which was Dr. Pavle Trpinac.

In May 1971, the Society of Medical Biochemists of Yugoslavia became the 28th member of the International Federation of Clinical Chemistry (IFCC). At that time the president of YuSMB was Tatjana Plećaš-Drljača. The Society of Medical Biochemists of Serbia and Montenegro is also a member of FESCC and the regional Balkan Clinical Laboratory Federation (BCLF) organization.

Since its establishment the Society has undertaken significant activities in all fields of clinical chemistry, according to guidelines and orientation of the IFCC. The main activities of the Society are in the fields of education, and the organization of laboratory services, external quality control, conferences and publishing. In collaboration with the Faculty of Pharmacy, the Society has devised education programs for undergraduate and postgraduate clinical chemists (master's degree and residency) through which full-time 5-year studies for medical biochemists and subsequent 3-year advanced training are being successfully completed. A very important role in establishing the specialization of medical biochemistry in Yugoslavia was played by Professor Ivan Berkeš, as the founder of medical biochemistry and clinical enzymology.

The Society of Medical Biochemists of Serbia has collaborated with the Ministry of Health, for the organization of laboratory services within all segments of the healthcare service (primary, secondary, and tertiary healthcare) in terms of implementing plans of action, education, organization, equipment, etc. In addition, a program of external quality control has been carried out since 1965 within the laboratories organized by the Society of Medical Biochemists (YUNEQAS), recently known as SNEQAS program. External quality assessment is implemented throughout our health system, which allows continual improvement of the workflow in all clinical-biochemical laboratories in Serbia.

To improve and maintain the quality of services, the Society, together with the Institute of Medical Biochemistry of the Clinical Center of Serbia and the Accreditation Body of Serbia (YUAT-ATS) started working on the introduction of quality management system according to standard ISO 9001, and accreditation to ISO 17025 and ISO 15189.

The Society is involved in significant publishing activity. Experts of the Society have participated in the preparation of published professional methodological guidebooks for the field of medical biochemistry through the Republic and Federal Ministries of Health. For over 25 years, the Society has published the journal “Jugoslovenska Medicinska Biohemija” (Yugoslav Medical Biochemistry) now renamed to “Journal of Medical Biochemistry”, as well as a series of books and scientific literature written by its members. It is worth mentioning that the Society published a monograph with the title “Development of Medical Biochemistry in Yugoslavia” (Majkić-Singh N, Đurđević J, Kavarić J, 1998), illustrating the development of medical biochemistry in our country since the Middle Ages.

The first professional and scientific meeting of medical biochemists in Yugoslavia was held in 1955 in Zagreb, and the first Congress of Medical Biochemists of Yugoslavia was held in 1963 in the same town. Each new congress was a step forward in the development of science and quality.

At present, the Society is involved in the organization of congresses (biennial), and events such as Biochemical days (every year), and Innovations in laboratory medicine (every year, International Fair on Medical Equipment Medipharm, Belgrade). The XV Congress of Medical Biochemistry and Laboratory Medicine 2006 has been held in Novi Sad together with 2nd FESCC Symposium for Balkan Region. The Society regularly organizes courses for continuous medical education of clinical chemists. In addition, as a member of the Balkan Clinical Laboratory Federation, the Yugoslav Society of Medical Biochemists organized two of the congresses of Balkan Clinical Laboratory Federation, the Fourth Congress in 1996 in Budva and the 11th Congress in 2003 in Belgrade. Plenary lectures presented at both

congresses are published in the monograph *Advances in Laboratory Medicine* (YuSMB, 1996.) and “Yugoslav Medical Biochemistry”, Volume 23(3), 2004.

The Society established the “Professor Ivan Berkes” Scientific Conference, devoted to the founder of clinical chemistry in Yugoslavia, which takes place in Belgrade every year (nine scientific conferences have been organized so far). On the occasion of this Conference, the Society awards a prize to the most successful graduated students of the Faculty of Pharmacy.

The members of the Society of Medical Biochemists of Serbia actively participate in all IFCC and other relevant Congresses and Conferences in the field of clinical chemistry and laboratory medicine. This participation promotes the implementation of standard procedures for diagnosis, forming of protocol and implementing uniform organization in all laboratories in the country.

In 2006 the Society was renamed the Society of Medical Biochemists of Serbia (SMBSRB). The Society is run by the Executive Board and the Assembly and acts through various commissions for standardization, organization and technology of laboratory services, quality control and education, as well as quality management and accreditation

The purpose of the SMBSRB is to engage all medical biochemists in development and improvement of all the branches of medical biochemistry in health service. Its tasks are the following: to standardize operations in clinical-biochemical laboratories, the education of young biochemists on all levels, to encourage scientific research, to set up of working standards, and to implement ethics codes and monitor the compliance of health workers. The SMBSRB is also involved in promoting systemized standards in the field of medical biochemistry, with the relevant republican institutions and in facilitating exchange of experiences between its members with the members of affiliate associations at home and abroad.

The Society of Medical Biochemists has a wide net of regular members (over 700), associate members and student member. There is a growing tendency for other experts from related natural and medical disciplines to become members as well. As a member of all international expert and scientific organizations for clinical chemistry and related disciplines, i.e. laboratory medicine (International Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine, IFCC; Forum of the European Societies of Clinical Chemistry, FESCC; European Confederation of Laboratory Medicine, ECLM; and Balkan Federation of Clinical Laboratory, BCLF) the Society is involved in cooperation on an international scale.

President of the Society is Professor Nada Majkić-Singh, who is also the National IFCC Representative, and General Secretary is Primaries Olivera Janković. Professor Svetlana Ignjatovic is FESCC Representative of the Society.

References

1. IFCC Handbook 2003-2005
2. Lines J, Heeren J. IFCC Celebrating 50 Years. IFCC, 2002.
3. Majkić-Singh N. History of medical biochemistry in Yugoslavia. Clin Chem News 1990;32:43.
4. Majkić-Singh N. Clinical chemistry – an independent discipline. Jug Med Biohem 1992; 11: 1-2.
5. Majkić-Singh N. Razvoj medicinske biohemije. Jug Med Biohem 1993; 12: 65-70.
6. Majkić-Singh N. Društvo medicinskih biohemičara Jugoslavije. Jug Med Biohem 1994; 13: 77-79.
7. Majkić-Singh N. Položaj i uloga medicinske biohemije u zdravstvenoj službi. Jug Med Biohem 1995; 14: 1-5.
8. Majkić-Singh, Đurđević J, Kavarić J. Razvoj medicinske biohemije u Jugoslaviji. DMBJ; 1998, Beograd.
9. Majkić-Singh N i sar. Centralna Laboratorija –Institut za medicinsku biohemiju Kliničkog centra Srbije (1952 u reči i slici 2002). DMBJ, 2002, Beograd.
10. Majkić-Singh N. Society of Medical Biochemists of Serbia and Montenegro: 50-year anniversary. Clin Chem Lab Med 2006; 44:234-235.

Prof. dr Nada Majkić-Singh

¹ The author is President of the Society of Medical Biochemists of Serbia