18th Anniversary of Studies in English at Faculty of Medicine - University of Belgrade

On December 9, 2013 the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Belgrade will observe its 93rd Anniversary and at the same time Studies in English will celebrate its 18th Birthday. That brings us memories on the historical days of our Department foundation which we would like to share with you.

Pursuant to Article 10 paragraph 3 Law of the University, the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted on December 20, 1995, the Decision on approval of Faculty of Medicine in Belgrade for teaching in English language. The initiative for the adoption of this solution was given by the Teaching Academic Council of the Faculty of Medicine in Belgrade at the meeting of June 26th 1995, pursuant to Art. 193 of the Statute of the Faculty of Medicine in Belgrade.

Teaching in English was preceded by a long preparation of compliance plans of teaching with plans for medical schools in the European Union and the United States. The beginning of these preparations can be considered March 18th 1994, because on that day for the first time was convened a Committee composed of internationally renowned teachers of the Faculty of Medicine UB, appointed by the Dean, Professor Radivoje Grbić, with the task to consider the proposal of organizing undergraduate and postgraduate studies in English. Tones were dissonant, because not all were of the opinion that the Faculty of Medicine in Belgrade should organize this type of teaching by the example of neighboring countries, i.e. Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and others. So no wonder that during the nearly two-year period of work so called Coordinating Body for teaching in English for academic 1995/96 year, appointed by the Dean, based on the Decision of the Council of the Medical Faculty of March 15th, 1996, year, was reduced to only 8 members.

The first Coordinating Body members were the Dean, Professor Radivoje Grbić, Vice-Deans and Professors: Slavko Simeunović, Vasilije Kalezić, Tomislav Jovanović, Rajko Dotlić, and Professors: Vujadin Mujović from the Department of Physiology and Gordana Teofilovski-Parapid from the Department of Anatomy, along with Professor Vasilios Thanopoulos from Athens, Greece.

In the academic year 1996-97, the Coordinating Body was joined by Academician Vladimir Kanjuh, Professors: Miodrag Ostojić, corresponding member of SASA (Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts), Vladimir Bumbalogrsvić, Petar Seferović, Nenad Rosić and Branislav Vidić from Georgetown University School of Medicine (Washington DC, US) in response to raised interest in this type of studies with consequent increased volume and complexity of issues.

The work of the Coordinating Body was at first led by the Dean and from the academic year 1996-97 by Vice-Dean for Academic Affairs in English, Professor Slavko Simeunović (1996-2000), later by Studies in English Head Professor Ruben Han (2000-2004). Since December 2004 it has been Chaired by Professor Teofilovski-Parapid, one of its founding members and curriculum creators.

A number of teaching staff was chosen for teaching in English language in particular, based on the educational experience at home and abroad, scientific contribution and knowledge of English. Among the teachers mentioned were 15 visiting professors at universities in the U.S. and other countries of the world, many with degrees validated in the U.S., over 55 members of prominent international professional associations with numerous publications in leading magazines and 5 members of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts.
The first generation of students, twenty two of them, were enrolled in the academic year 1995-96. The next school year enrollment figures doubled and more students joined from medical schools in Hungary, Czech Republic, Romania, Belgium and Iraq, and later from France, the United States and Libya. Today we can proudly say that this curriculum was completed by 171 medical doctors from 25 countries and 4 continents.

From right to left Ŧ Professor Radivoje Grbić, the Dean, awarded students Ŧ Lamia Androniki and Biljana Ratkovic, Professor Slavko Simeunović Ŧ the Vice-Dean and Professor Gordana Teofilovski-Parapid (Belgrade, December 9, 1996)

Regardless the 1999 bombing, which has seriously undermined the popularity of the region, the Studies in English still managed to prevail. This was helped by substantial advantage of the program itself: the teaching was in English; studying was shorter and more efficient, since foreign students' first year of integration usually burdened by poor knowledge of Serbian language was much easier in this case; teaching groups were small allowing easier and better transfer of knowledge and continuous monitoring of students' progress; textbooks were and still are carefully selected from the latest editions of textbooks recommended as well by the highest ranking medical schools in the US and the UK.

Keeping up the educational pace with the world is enabled by many of our faculty who teach at medical schools in the U.S. and throughout the world, as visiting professors, and a large number of invited lecturers and visiting professors from prestigious medical schools worldwide.

In the academic year 2009-10, Studies in English made another progress introducing first PhD studies exclusively in English. Finally, on June 11, 2010 the new modern accreditation of Studies in English Ŧ Commission on Accreditation and Quality Evaluation of Republic of Serbia reached the decision on separate accreditation of integrated studies of medicine in English.
Today, when the Faculty of Medicine celebrates its 93rd Anniversary and our Studies are “coming of age” by turning 18— with all modesties set aside—we are the only Faculty within the University of Belgrade with graduate studies in English. With great pride and joy, we are a part of the University which has reached its place among top 400 universities in the world, according to the ranking carried out by the Shanghai Jiao Tong University, better known as the Shanghai List.

With our rich experience forged during this long and eventful journey on one side and re-establishment of international connections of Belgrade and Serbia on the other, new prospective for the Studies in English—Faculty of Medicine and the University of Belgrade keep opening and we are ready to welcome them with the same zeal as 18 years ago.

Happy Birthday!

Professor Gordana Teofilovski-Parapid, MD, PhD
Chair for Studies in English