



In Memoriam

DELCHO ZHELYAZKOV: THE SCHOLAR, THE TEACHER, THE MAN

On July 21st 2000, only a few months before his 75th anniversary, died Professor Delcho Krustev Zhelyazkov, MD. He was one of the outstanding names in the field of pharmacology in Bulgaria. An erudite of wide spectrum of interests often beyond his field, and a man totally devoted to his work, he dedicated his life to science and education, and remained loyal until his end.

Delcho Zhelyazkov was born on September 3rd 1925 in the small village of Vinarovo near Stara Zagora, Bulgaria. The boy from the village tirelessly, month after month, and year after year walked some 20 km to reach the school in the city and to get knowledge. This insatiable thirst for knowledge pursued him ever since. When, as a reward-holder after his graduation from the Medical Institute in Sofia in 1952, he was given the opportunity to choose a field to work in, he turned to pharmacology. His first and beloved teacher was Professor Petar Nikolov. Several years later, in 1960, Delcho Zhelyazkov, as Associate Professor, was one of the firsts to establish the Medical Institute (now Medical University) in Varna. The Department of Pharmacology was founded and chaired by him for the following 30 years. During the years of his guidance Professor Zhelyazkov set up and developed the main trends of scientific research of the Department of Pharmacology, which are still fruitful today. His monographs "*Regulatory Mechanisms in the Organism*" (1961) and "*Biogenic Amines*" (1966) reflected an early interest in fundamental problems in the biomedical science and his attempts to find principle answers based on specific knowledge. He was a pioneer in the development of the pharmacobiochemical studies of catecholamines and histamine in Bulgaria. He did a lot for the development and clinical evaluation of many original or generic Bulgarian drug preparations such as gentamicin, furanthril, almagel etc. Much of his effort was directed to the design and synthesis of biologically active compounds on the basis of the pharmacophore principle, and to their pharmacological characterization. His research was notable for his original ideas, profound thinking, tireless experimental work, high responsibility and morality. Seeking answers for questions that he posed to himself engulfed him entirely. He specialized in

Moscow, Leningrad and Odessa, in the National Institute of Health in Bethesda, USA, in Germany and Czechoslovakia. This contributed to further deepening his thinking and to broadening the field of his interests.

Professor Zhelyazkov shared readily his knowledge with those who wanted to learn. During his active career as a pharmacologist in Varna and for a short period in Sofia he didn't deny help to anybody. He directed the research of his collaborators and tutored students' works. As a result nine PhD Theses were successfully defended under his supervision and many of his collaborators later attained academic rank. Professor Zhelyazkov was especially fond of his students. He was a teacher by vocation and this kind of work brought particular satisfaction to him. He kept his fatherly warmth for students till his last days. He devoted much of his enthusiasm and innovative energy to his work as a lecturer. He was the first to introduce a course of general pharmacology for medical students in the late 1960's, when this subject was only taught in a small number of universities worldwide. Teaching pharmacokinetics as a basis for optimizing pharmacotherapy was also his merit. He strongly encouraged teaching medical students in clinical pharmacology.

Professor Zhelyazkov was internationally acknowledged as a member and cofounder of the European Society of Pharmacobiochemistry; by his honored membership of the Czechoslovakian National Medical Society "Yan Purkinie" and the Ukraine National Pharmacology Society; by working as a pharmacology expert of WHO in India and Mongolia. He was invited to deliver lectures abroad in Kiev, Odessa, Belgrade, Bursa, Ulan Bator, New Delhi, etc. He had fruitful collaboration and close friendship with many well-known names of the world pharmacology such as S. Anichkov, D. Charkevich, M. Mashkovski, S. Udenfriend, U. Trendelenburg, E. Muscoll, H. Rashkova, L. Sekeresch, and P. Lechat, whose recognition he deservedly enjoyed.

We lost a respected teacher and professional, a beloved lecturer and a good friend, who will be long remembered by all who knew and loved him.

From his friends, students and disciples