

60. Years (1945-2005) Macedonian Medical Association

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Abstract

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This year the monographic book "60 Years Macedonian Medical Association 1945-2005" was published, denoting more than six decades successful existence of Macedonian Medical Association (MMA). In the period behind us, the MMA has been bearer of the continuous development and growth of the health provision system. Starting its activities back in 1945, with only 123 doctors and dentists working in Republic of Macedonia, the MMA today represents more than 5000 doctors, of whom 3025 are specialists in various fields. The doctors in the MMA are organized into 22 regional or local associations and 70 specialist and sub-specialist associations. The MMA was the predecessor of the Faculty of Medicine in Macedonia, with the vast majority of the staff being recruited from MMA. A major contribution to the professional and scientific development of the medical profession in Macedonia was achieved through the introduction of the scientific journal and organization of scientific congresses under auspice of MMA. Today MMA is an active participant, initiator and consultant in the creation and improvement of the laws regulating the health service provision in the country. The highest state honour, the 11th October Award was awarded to MMA, as recognition for its continuous commitment to progress of Macedonian medicine.

This year, the monographic book "60 Years Macedonian Medical Association 1945-2005" was published by the editor in chief, Prof. d-r Jovan Tofoski (1). It is a comprehensive review of the history of this most important medical society in the Republic of Macedonia. We find it both, interesting and important to emphasize once again the outstanding activities of MMA in the past six decades.

The Macedonian Medical Association (MMA) was founded after the Second World War in 1945, as an association of medical doctors, pharmacists and stomatologists, joined together with a mission to promote the medical and related sciences and to

contribute to the growth of the dignity of the doctor's profession. After two years of its foundation, in 1947 when the basis for medical related work was created, the pharmacists and later, in 2004, the doctors of stomatology detached into separate associations (2, 3).

In the past 60 years of turbulent changes in the Republic of Macedonia, the MMA was the bearer of the continuous development and growth of the health provision system. We have witnessed a remarkable swift and continuous development in all areas of the healthcare system, however the fundamental determination was and still is the provision of universal access



Figure 1: The first elected president of MMA was Prof. Dr-r Boris Spirov (President from 1945-1948), one of the pioneers in the formation of the Faculty of medicine in Skopje.

to health care for all citizens. The principles of accessibility and rationality orchestrated by MMA were the basis for creating a network of health care organisations adequate to meet the needs of a system of integrated health care, with an emphasis on prevention of disease and on improving the health status of the population (4-8).

During the past six decades, the structural

changes in the health service reflected the social, socio-economic and political changes which the state itself has undergone. In 1991, upon the gaining of independence of the Republic of Macedonia, the new Law on Health Provision was adopted. The Law and all its subsequent amendments and alterations were aimed towards building up a functional health system compatible with the European standards. The MMA played an important role in the reorganization of Macedonian health system and was active participant in the implementation of the new legislative.

In the time of the foundation of MMA, in 1945, there were only 123 doctors and dentists, 96 pharmaceutical chemists and 120 medical workers with secondary school qualifications in the Republic of Macedonia. Today, there are around 5000 doctors, of whom 3025 are specialists in various fields while there are 1465 general practitioners of whom 35% are family doctors. The doctors in the MMA are organized into 22 regional or local associations in the larger towns of Macedonia and 70 specialist and sub-specialist associations (9, 10).

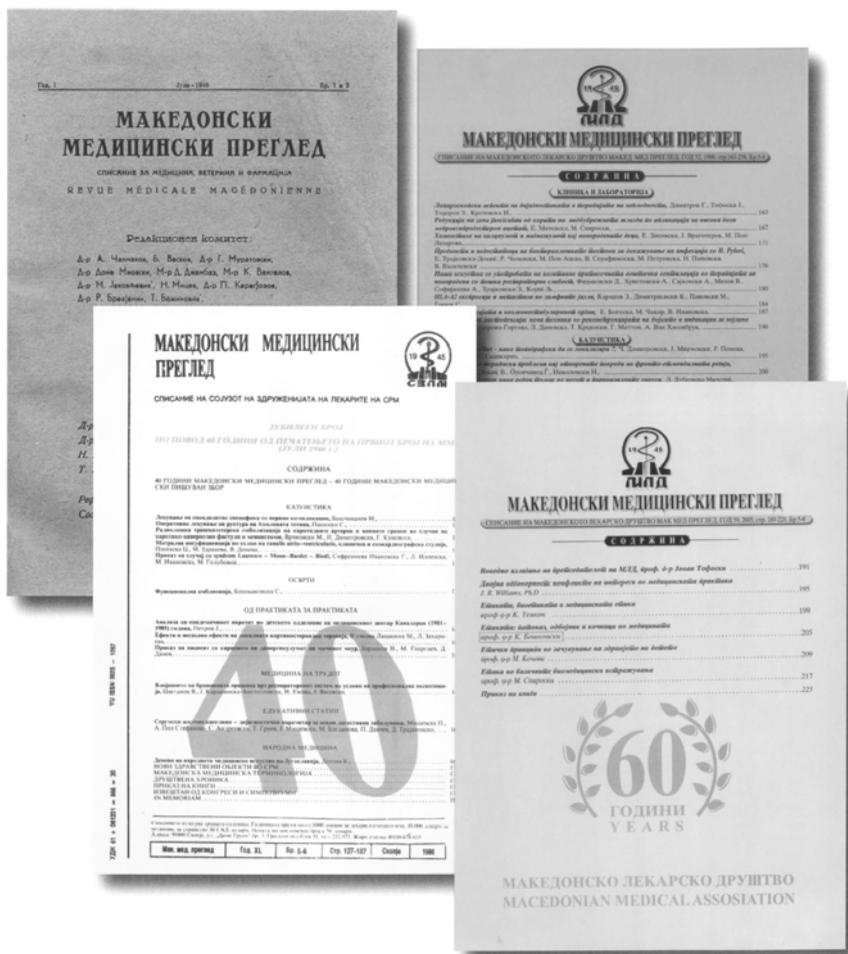


Figure 2: Macedonian Medical Review (Makedonski medicinski preglod or Makedon Med Pregl) is the longest-standing journal in the field of medicine in Macedonia. Makedon Med Pregl was established in 1946 by the Macedonian Medical Association, later Federation of Medical Associations, and today is again the organ of the Macedonian Medical Association.



Figure 3: One of the most important activities of Macedonian Medical Association is organisation of Congresses of Macedonian Medical Doctors (50. Years MMA up, 60. Years MMA down)

The first elected president of MMA was Prof. dr Boris Spirov (President from 1945-1948), one of the pioneers in the formation of the Faculty of medicine in Skopje. In the following sixty three years, more than twenty outstanding medical professionals devoted themselves entirely on voluntary basis as presidents of MMA to the building-up, growth and establishment of MMA as one of the pillars of the health protection in Republic of Macedonia.

The MMA was the predecessor of the only Faculty of Medicine in Macedonia. After the need of its foundation was recognized in 1945, this institution of higher education and scientific learning was founded in 1947. The vast majority of the staff was recruited from MMA. This was an event of outstanding significance for the further development of the health service in Macedonia. The close and fruitful cooperation between the two pioneer medical institutions lasts in present time. The Faculty soon became the institution in which future medical staff was educated. The school was also responsible for forming and educating future specialists in all the various fields of medicine. With the increase in the number of specialists through the years, conditions were created for better professional work within the MMA. Specialist sections began to be formed which discussed and debated specific issues

from their particular field of specialisation. The formation of these sections marked the start of a new period of expert professional activity on the part of the MMA (11-14).

However, the role of MMA did not fade after the formation of the Medical Faculty. MMA has not only followed but continued to be an active participant, initiator and consultant in the creation and improvement of the laws regulating the health service provision in the country. Its proposals and conclusions have frequently been influential in the passing of specific legislature. Virtually all doctors in Macedonia are involved in the work of these associations within the MMA and actively participate in the work of the MMA, exchanging professional and ethical opinions on the form and content of their work, ideas and knowledge gained from everyday or highly specific practical experience of working with patients.

During the six decades of its existence and its continuous growth and development, the MMA has organized and held sixteen general congresses for doctors and more than sixty-five congresses for specialised branches. The presented papers, 12077 in total were submitted, edited and published in special Proceedings or supplements to the *Macedonian Medical Review*. The resulting impact to the overall organisational, professional and scientific growth of the MMA and medical science and practice in Macedonia may perhaps best be testified by the quality and success of the congresses held (15, 16).

Another important contribution of MMA to the professional and scientific development, continuing medical education and the advancement of the medical profession in Macedonia was the introduction of the scientific journal aimed towards expanding and advancing the knowledge and the skills in contemporary



Figure 4: In May 1993, Republic of Macedonia was accepted in the WHO. The Macedonian delegation comprised from left to right: B. Tasevska (representative from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), S. Tofovic, J. Tofoski and B. Malinska.



Figure 5: The first five ministers of health in the Republic of Macedonia. From left to right: P. Ilievski (May 1997 – November 1998), I. Filipce (December 1994 – May 1997), S. Bogdanov (November 1998 – May 1999), P. Kolevski (March 1991 – September 1992), J. Tofoski (September 1992 – December 1994).

medicine which take place beyond the institutional framework, as well as presentation of the professional and scientific achievements of Macedonian doctors. The MMA journal, the *Macedonian Medical Review*, has been coming out for fifty-nine years now with a total of 4,350 papers reviewed and published. The journal is registered in the *Index Medicus MeSH*, with its centres in Köln and Washington, and in the *Bulletin Scientifique*, whereby it has gained entry into the world's information and classification centres.

In June 1992, MMA took the initiative of forming the Macedonian Chamber of Medicine as a separate

institution with the role of an inspectorate assessing the knowledge and skills and accrediting doctors as being capable of implementing preventive processes and the curing of patients on the basis of principles recognised worldwide in the contemporary world, medical principles based on evidence. One of the more recent initiatives taken by MMA in collaboration with the Ministry of health and the Faculty of Medicine is the preparation of professional guidelines regarding the work of medical doctors based on evidence. It is an ongoing process with periodic up-dating in order to ensure better quality of the medical services and more rational and efficient treatment of patients recognised worldwide. All the latest contents of these recommendations are easily accessible on: http://www.mld.org.mk/prikazivest.php?v_id=33.

All this vast activity on the part of the Association has up to the present been carried out on an entirely voluntary basis, which speaks of the enthusiasm of the entire MMA membership in their efforts to offer the Macedonian public health protection as high quality as possible by the application of good medical practice and high ethical standards.

The present structure of MMA is shown on figure 6. The President of MMA is elected at the assembly of delegates together with 2 Vice-presidents and Secretary General. There are eight members of the Executive Board (two members from 4 different disciplines) and a Supervisory Board with two members and a

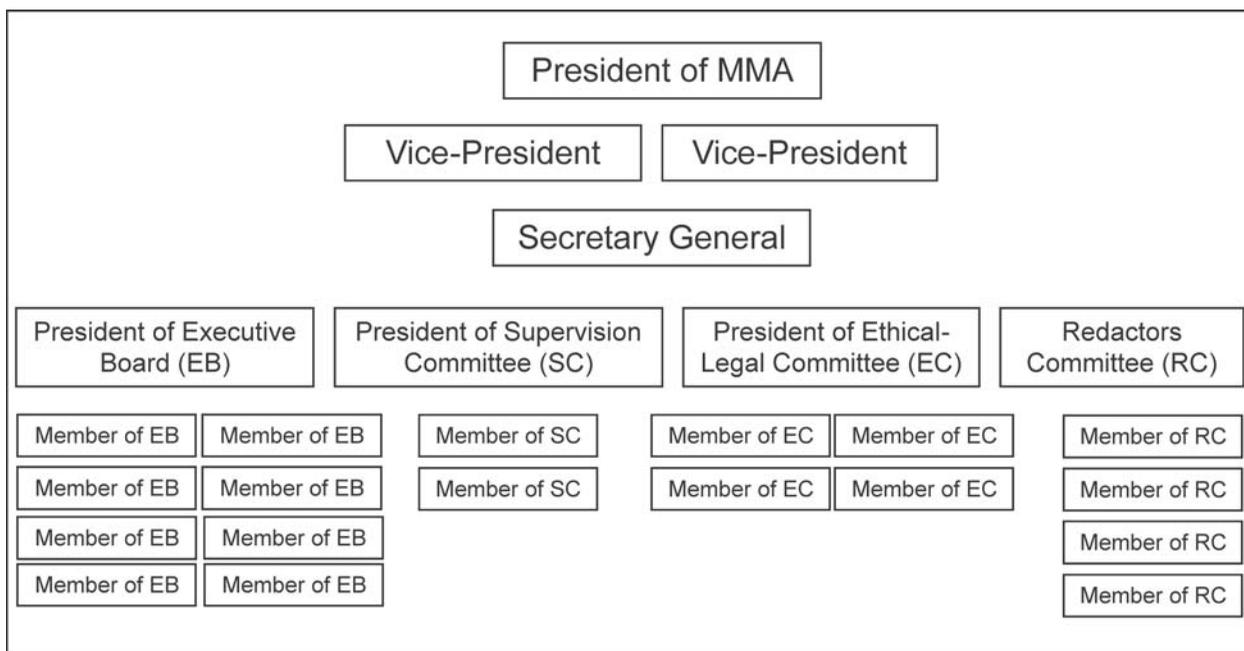


Figure 6: Organizational structure of MMA.

President. As integral part of the MMA staff, an Ethical-Legal Committee and Redactors Committee exist (Fig. 6).

The Macedonian Medical Association has for many years been a legitimate member of the World Medical Association (W.M.A.), the European Forum of Medical Associations, and the South-east European Forum of Medical Associations. In addition to the activities on the domestic front, the MMA, with its extensively developed network of international cooperation, makes a highly significant contribution to the recognition and confirmation of the Republic of Macedonia worldwide and to our coming closer to the Euro-Atlantic community.

Through all its activities the MMA has made an inestimable contribution to the overall development of the Republic of Macedonia with an emphasis on the prevention of disease and the improvement of the health status of the population. As recognition of all its worthy and visible services the Macedonian Medical Association has received the highest state honour, the 11th October Award.

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