



The role of schools of medicine during the Croatian Homeland War

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1. INTRODUCTION

- April 22, 1990. First round of first multi- party elections
- May 30, 1990. First constitutive session of the parliament
- **December 16, 1990. Crisis Headquarters (HQ) of the Ministry of Health, later known as General crisis headquarters of the Republic of Croatia. (GSS RH).**
- **Command of the General crisis HQ: prof. dr. sc. Andrija Hebrang, prim. dr. Ivo Prodan and prim. dr. Slobodan Dešković**
- Main role of the Crisis HQ: Management of the entire health system inside the Ministry of Health along side with the Ministry of Internal affairs and later with the Ministry of Defence, development of plans of preparedness and recovery and procurement of drugs and other medical material. Basic task was support and adequate education of doctors and other medical personnel for wartime health care.



2. INTEGRATED CIVILIAN-MILITARY HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

- **September 10, 1990. Decree on health care and health insurance in the event of a state of war or an immediate threat to independence and unity.**
- **Preparedness plan** : 3 levels of readiness + 43 measures according to the needs on the field.
- **Echalon approach to health care:**
 - 1. echalon: first aid help and evacuation
 - 2. echalon: medical stations, triage of the wounded and Mobile Surgical Team (MST)
 - 3. echalon: dislocated war hospitals
 - 4. echalon: civilian hospitals converted into military ones (final health care)
- **Financing of wartime healthcare and humanitarian action: Agreement on humanitarian cooperation with Bosnia.**



3. GENERAL STAFF OF MEDICAL CORPS OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

- *Decision on organization and functioning of the Croatian army in peace and war*
- GSS RH was organized according to the type of department headed by the commanders and the type of district HQ managed by hospital directors.
- Health administration of the Ministry of Defence and the Crisis HQ of the Ministry of Health are two crisis organizations with the function of being prepared and providing emergency interventions in case of sudden events.
- The military health service in the units maintains the primary health care contracted with the Croatian Institute for Health Insurance as well as specific health care that needed to be developed in specialized centers for aviation and maritime medicine.



4. SCHOOL OF MEDICINE UNIVERSITY OF ZAGREB

- 1790. The first request for the establishment of the Zagreb School of Medicine
- Croatian parliament, January 13, 1874. Legal article on the organization of universities Franje Josip I. in Zagreb
- **November 13, 1917. establishment of the Zagreb School of Medicine (Dr. Teodor Wickerhauser, Dr. Miroslav Čačković, and Dr. Dragutin Mašek)**
- ***December 17, 1917.*** The first lecture was held (prof. dr. sc. Drago Perović)- ***Faculty day***
- ***The cradle of university schools: the influence on the development of medicine in the Republic of Croatia and in neighbouring countries.***





General staff of medical corps was a first defence organization at the state level and fully connected with School of Medicine University of Zagreb and its clinical teaching bases.

DEPARTMENTS	SERVICES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mobile surgical teams• War hospitals• Preventive medical care• Supply of medicine and sanitary materials• Media research and information• Mental health• International cooperation• Special interventions• Toxicology• Dental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Education and training• Development of an information system for collecting data about victims of Homeland War• Transfusion

- **Sub-headquarters medical unit- „Medical platoon”**





School of medicine, University of Zagreb, undated (2)



• DEPARTMENT FOR MOBILE SURGICAL TEAMS

- **MST- Mobile surgical team: surgeon, anesthesiologist, surgical and anesthesiological technician**
- There were organized along all lines of the battlefield, in function as a 1st echelon (emergency medicine, general medicine, general surgery).
- **650 members:** 300 doctors specialists, 300 nurses/med.technicians and 50 drivers.
- Each general hospital was obligated to form two MST, clinical hospital three MST, and clinical health center four MST.
- Except by command of GSS RH, large number of teams were organized spontaneously, on the filed.





Mobile surgical team, Plitvice 1995. (1)



• SERVICE FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- The first service manager was Prof. **Mate Granić**, PhD, who was succeeded by Prof. **Željko Reiner**, PhD.
- Education of doctors and other Croatian soldiers through short courses and simulation educational records.
- **First manual script *Croatian War Surgery***
- **Section for emergency medicine and Medical platoon + auxiliary**



Special self-care course, Special police unit "Alfa",
Sljeme, 1993. (1)



• SUB-HEADQUATERS MEDICAL UNIT- “MEDICAL PLATOON”



Students and young doctors of the „Medical Platoon” and Skill Cabinet with the Dean of the School of Medicine, Prof. Ivica Kostović, PhD, in front of the dean’s building of the School of Medicine, University of Zagreb, March 1992. (1)



Courses of the Mobile Educational Team in the field with the Chief of Medical Services of the 150th Brigade, Dr. Večeslav Bergman, February, 1992. (1)



5.1. Clinical teaching bases School of medicine University of Zagreb

- **University Hospital Merkur**- Eastern Slavonija and assistance to the Vukovar hospital and evacuation of the wounded from war hospital Stari Mikanovci
- **University Hospital Centre „Sestre milosrdnice”** – 4th echalon + 3 war hospitals in function of 3rd echalon
 - Deegres of readiness A, B, C, D
- **General Hospital „Sveti Duh”** - referent hospital for NATO and IFOR forces
 - Slavonija, Banovina, Lika, Kordun, South battlefield i BiH
 - army reserve
- **University Hospital Centre Zagreb**
 - ✓ The first headquarters of the Croatian Health Service, the first head of the Croatian National Health Service, **prim. dr. Ivo Prodan (the first Croatian physician general)**
 - ✓ level III. and IV. Echelon
 - ✓ the central educational and central institution for the treatment of the wounded in Croatia
 - ✓ **the first manual of *Croatian war surgery***





**Supreme Commander of the Croatian army, dr. Franjo Tuđman, visiting the wounded,
University Hospital Centre Zagreb 1991. (1)**



- **Traumatology Clinic Zagreb**– the most MST, **total 99**.
- 6000 wounded were taken care of on an outpatient basis , 2000 were hospitalized.
- **Military-police operation „STORM”**
- **Nova Bila „Travnik, BiH”**



Cardinal mons. Franjo Kuharić (2)



5.1. School of medicine University of Osijek, Clinical Hospital Centre Osijek

- Opened in 1979. as dislocated Study of Medicine at the School of Medicine University of Zagreb
 - June 15, 1998. The first session of the Faculty Council was held
 - On September 22, 1998. School of Medicine of the Josip Juraj Strossmayer in Osijek was officially opened.
- **Clinical Hospital Centre Osijek**
 - ✓ 1600 beds, treated more than 7000 wounded
 - ✓ The crisis headquarters of **General Hospital Osijek was founded on June 27, 1991.**
 - ✓ The strategic importance of hospital survival
 - ✓ Cooperation with hospitals in Našice, Vinkovci, and Vukovar hospital



5.3. School of medicine University of Split and Clinical Hospital Centre Split

- 1974. Zagreb School of Medicine established in Split a two-year course
- The study became a six-year course in the academic year 1990./91.
- The independent School of medicine in Split was founded in 1997. god.
- The main teaching base was at the Split General Hospital which in 1986. grew into the Clinical Hospital Centre (Splitske toplice and Križine Hospital (former Military Hospital) were attached to the hospital in 1993.
- **Clinical Hospital Centre Split**
 - ✓ Medic headquarters cover: Zadar, Šibenik, Knin, Split, and part of Dubrovnik area.
 - ✓ September 16, 1991. The military hospital in Križine was transferred to the Croatian side.
 - ✓ Over 33,000 wounded from **BiH were treated.**
- Assistance from the Government of the Republic of Italy



5.4. School of medicine University of Rijeka and Clinical Hospital Centre Rijeka

- **Founded in July 12, 1995.**
- Preventive measures in the form of opening a large number of exam dates, giving the possibility of transferring more exams to the next year, classes were held according to a shortened program. Migrant students are allowed to enroll and study in all courses of the Faculty.
- **Courses and trainings in the treatment of war wounds.**
- **Šiška War Hospital** (Northern Croatian Medical Headquarters)- 226 days, treatment of 980 wounded, unblocked „Križ” and Zadar hills.
- **Establishment of the Rehabilitation Centre for the wounded of the Homeland War, organization of the work of the Psychotherapy Centre for Psychotrauma.**
- **Student participation in the international promotion of the truth about the aggression against Croatia.**



5.4 School of medicine University of Rijeka and Clinical Hospital Centre Rijeka

- Headquarters of the enemy army was located at Trsat, close to Rijeka Clinical Hospital Centre
- Level od 3rd, 4th and 5th echalon. Head of defence on the Lika-Senj battlefield, i.e.in the Medical Headquarters of Northern Croatia.
- **Battle for Gospić**
- **dr. Zlatko Tomašić** *Homeland War hero*, head of the medical service of the Rijeka Operational Zone
- In cooperation with the Red Cross, a large number of cross-border migrants and refugees were cared for (**Health Centre Rijeka: 162,953 health services**)
- Dislocated surgical clinics and halls on Velebit, Pag, Senj, Karlobar, etc.





School of Medicine Osijek



School of Medicine Rijeka



School of Medicine Split



5.5. VUKOVAR HOSPITAL

- The city of Vukovar was under **siege and complete encirclement for 87 days.**
- During July 1991, the Croatian authorities lost complete control over Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Kordun.
- On September 25, 1991, the 204th HV brigade was formed from members of the armed forces in Vukovar.
- **80,000 aggressor soldiers and 6,800 Croatian defenders.**
- Corn route - humanitarian and medical aid, weapons and manpower
- A reserve hospital was formed in the basement of the Borovo-comerc building in Borovo Naselje.
- **dr. Vesna Bosanac**, director of the Vukovar Hospital, and Dr. Juraj Njavro, commander of the war medical service of the Municipality of Vukovar



5.5. VUKOVAR HOSPITAL

- About 700 shells fell on the Vukovar hospital every day.
-
- Three surgical teams, an average of 37 wounded a day. In 70% of cases, the wounded were civilians, and 80% of injuries were caused by explosive devices.
- **Representatives of the International Red Cross falsified the agreement on neutralization of the hospital and evacuation of the wounded!!**
- Out of 933 employees, 276 of them met the end of the siege in the hospital.
- 57 children were wounded, 33 of them died and were killed.
- **Twenty employees of the Vukovar War Hospital were killed at Ovčara and the fate of four of them is unknown. Eleven of them died and were killed during the aggression.**





„The Vukovar hospital was a place of hope and salvation for many civilians and wounded in the moments when the defense of the city of Vukovar was broken”

Branko Borković „Mladi Jastreb”



6. CONCLUSION

- Three decades have passed since the beginning of the war. The Croatian war medical corps had a heroic role in caring for Croatian veterans and civilians.
- Schools of medicine are deeply involved in the creation of the independent Republic of Croatia. The built-in knowledge, effort, and enthusiasm of the teachers of the School of Medicine in Zagreb in the establishment and formation of a unique integral civil-military system and the GSS of the Republic of Croatia resulted in a **mortality rate below 1.5%** and became a model for numerous world military forces.
- Medical expertise and patriotism made up for the lack of military experience and manpower, and faith in justice and the realization of the centuries-old dream of an independent Croatian state prevailed.



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"You medics are the only form of defense I've never had any problems with and I thank you for that!"

dr. Franjo Tuđman

THE FIRST CROATIAN PRESIDENT

Thank you for your attention!

