



# SACCLM

## Slovenian Association for Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine

The beginnings: The first clinical chemistry laboratory in Slovenia was established in March 1941 at the University Hospital of Internal Medicine in Ljubljana. In this laboratory, biochemical investigations of biological material for the needs of patients were carried out under the guidance of a university-educated expert. Prior to that, only small handy laboratories, mainly for haematological and urine tests, were operating in Slovenia. Since the 1950s, gradually, laboratories started to be established also in other hospitals in Slovenia, and later on also in health centres. Heads of the laboratories were chemists, pharmacists, biologists or physicians. In the beginning, they were addressing professional and organisational tasks individually. They were introducing laboratory tests according to analytical procedures feasible in the then-circumstances, were already practising internal quality control and, later on, also external inter-laboratory control. In Slovenia, adequate schools on the secondary and university levels still had to be established; following the example of residency programmes for medical doctors, similar specialisation in medical biochemistry had to be developed, which would enable professionals to obtain the title of specialist in medical biochemistry; as many as possible education and training programmes also had to be prepared for other laboratory personnel since the majority of them lacked formal education.

The period from 1961 to 1991: In order to deal with the above problems more easily and efficiently, after a careful consideration our colleagues formed a professional association. As the majority of laboratory staff with a university degree were pharmacists, they decided to establish a Section of Medical Biochemists at the Pharmaceutical Society of Slovenia. The founding meeting of the Section was held on 2 October 1961. The basic task of the Section was to provide education and training for its members through professional meetings that also included lectures. Residency programme in medical biochemistry was officially adopted in 1960, however it took a few more years before it was generally recognised in health care as something normal, indisputable and necessary. The Section closely cooperated with the newly established education institutions from which came graduates – prospective laboratory workers: the Secondary School for Laboratory Technicians in Ljubljana and the Pharmaceutical Department at the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Technology (FNST) of the University

of Ljubljana. Thanks to Prof. Niko Jesenovec, PhD (1928-1993), after the year 1977, study programmes at the Pharmaceutical Department were upgraded and supplemented with contents that were relevant for the knowledge of clinical biochemistry, and gradually new courses were introduced in addition to the existing ones. In 1986, Chair for Clinical Biochemistry was established at the Pharmaceutical Department of the FNST in Ljubljana, with educational tasks and research objectives in the field of clinical chemistry at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. In 1978, the then Central Clinical-Chemical Laboratory of the University Medical Centre Ljubljana gave rise to the Institute of Clinical Chemistry and Clinical Biochemistry, the latter University Institute. Along with the rapid development of the profession, this professional institution took over a considerable amount of tasks and thus disburdened the Section. After 1970, the Slovenian clinical chemists started to open up and collaborate with colleagues from abroad. Laboratories were gradually equipped with semi-automatic and automatic analysers.

From the beginning of the 90's till present day: It became increasingly logical that, due to the specificity of their work, rather than staying under the Slovenian Pharmaceutical Society, clinical chemists should establish their own society. On 14 April 1994, we gathered in Ljubljana on the founding assembly of our new association – the Slovenian Association for Clinical Chemistry (SACC). By its new statute, the SACC ceased to be an integral part of the Slovenian Pharmaceutical Society. On 1 January 1995, the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Slovenia registered the Slovenian Association for Clinical Chemistry as an independent association.

With the disintegration of Yugoslavia in 1991, our former umbrella association – the Society of Medical Biochemists of Yugoslavia – ceased to operate. This put an end to the collective membership of medical biochemists from the former Yugoslav republics in the International Federation of Clinical Chemistry (IFCC). Therefore, a procedure for obtaining new membership in the IFCC had to be carried out. At the XVth International Congress of Clinical Chemistry on 14 November 1993 in Melbourne, the IFCC Council Meeting on the proposal of the IFCC Executive Board voted that Slovenia become a full member of the IFCC by 1 January 1994. Our new association was also admitted to the Forum of the European Societies of Clinical Chemistry (FESCC), present European Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (EFLM). SACC and FESCC started to organise International Conferences on Quality (and Accreditation) of Medical Laboratories (5 such conferences have been organised so far, the first one in January 2002).

After Slovenia's accession to the European Union in 2004, we automatically became members of the European Communities Confederation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (EC4). The permanent representative of SACC in the EC4 Register Commission coordinates the activities related to the registration of our specialists in the EC4 European Register of Specialists in Laboratory Medicine. Prior to starting the registration process, we had to establish a National Register of Specialists in Laboratory Medicine. After that we requested the EC4 Registration Commission to check the equivalence of Slovenian National Standard (of education of specialists in





medical biochemistry) with EC4 Register Standard (EC4 European Syllabus for Post-Graduate Training in Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine). In October 2005, the delegates of the EC4 Members confirmed the Equivalence of Standards in Slovenia. Soon after that, process has been launched for registration in the EC4 European Register of Specialists in Laboratory Medicine; thus in 2006, the first candidates from Slovenia obtained their certificates of the title of European Specialist in Laboratory Medicine (abbreviation EuSpLM).

Every four years, Slovenian Congress of Clinical Chemistry with international participation is held under the auspices of FESCC (the first one in 2000). Since 2001, the SACC has been actively collaborating with the Croatian Society of Medical Biochemists (CSMB) at their annual FESCC Continuous Postgraduate Course in Dubrovnik. The tradition of cooperation between the Slovenian and Croatian medical biochemists is maintained through their biennial professional meetings; by 1993, the former intersectional meetings gave place to the International Symposia of SACC and CSMB. We have been actively participating in the congresses of clinical chemistry and laboratory medicine of the Central European Alpe-Adria countries; thus we hosted the 4th congress in 1997 in Bled.

In Slovenia, we most frequently cooperate with the Chairs of Clinical Biochemistry at the Faculty of Pharmacy of the University of Ljubljana and at the Medical Faculty of the University of Maribor, as well as with the Clinical Institute of Clinical Chemistry and Biochemistry of the University Medical Centre Ljubljana, and with the Slovenian Chamber of Laboratory Medicine. Our Association nominates one third of members in the 9-member Expanded Expert Committee for Laboratory Diagnostics at the Ministry of Health. In 2010, the same Ministry granted us the status of an association in the public interest.

In 2014, the name of our association was changed into the Slovenian Association for Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (SACCLM). By the end of 2014, it had some 290 members. A half of these have a university degree, of these 92 are specialists in medical biochemistry, 40 with the title of EuSpLM. Around 25 members completed their postgraduate studies by obtaining a master's degree and another 25 a PhD degree.

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