

Symposium “Musculoskeletal diseases in the elderly”

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The scientific symposium entitled “Musculoskeletal diseases in old age” were held on October 15, 2021, in the Library of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts (HAZU), organized by the Department of Medical Sciences HAZU and the Croatian Academy of Medical Sciences (AMZH) and the Global Alliance for musculoskeletal health Decade of Bones and Joints of the Croatian Medical Association (HLZ). The symposium was held following the recommendations of the Croatian Institute of Public Health (HZJZ) regarding epidemiological measures, with the participation of about 40 participants.

Populations around the world are known to be ageing and this demographic transition is affecting almost all aspects of society. Between 1990 and 2020, there was a clear demographic shift - the number of people over the age of 65 is twice as high. This decade (2021-2030) has been declared by the United Nations as the Decade of Healthy Aging - a decade of coordinated global action on healthy ageing to ensure that older people can reach their potential in dignity and equality and a healthy environment. It is known that the most common causes of severe, long-lasting pain and physical incapacity are musculoskeletal injuries and diseases that affect

millions of people around the world and strongly affect the individual, society and health care systems. Given that inflammatory and non-inflammatory rheumatic diseases also occur in old age, the profession and the health care system are facing the challenges of recognizing and treating these people as early as possible.

This symposium was dedicated to healthy ageing, education in geriatrics and the systematic implementation of early intervention (early diagnosis and early, adequate treatment) of inflammatory rheumatic diseases in old age. At the beginning of the Symposium, the Secretary of the Department of Medical Sciences of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Academician Vida Demarin, and the President of the Croatian Academy of Medical Sciences, prof. dr. sc. Alemka Markotić. After that, on behalf of the organizers, Academician Marko Pećina pointed out that the symposium “Musculoskeletal Diseases in Old Age” follows a long tradition of holding scientific and professional meetings at the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts dedicated to gerontology, highlighting the publication Frane Kogoj, then-Secretary of the Department of Medical Sciences, JAZU. Academician Pećina emphasized that the title of the current symposium could rightly be extended to the title “Symposium on Gerontology”, given that the initial presentations also focused on general issues in gerontology. Prof. dr. sc. Jadranka Morović-Vergles, also on behalf of the organizers, emphasized the importance of rheumatic diseases in gerontology, ie geronto-rheumatology, emphasizing the importance of specialization of geriatrics in Croatia.



The first part of the symposium began with the lecture “Geriatrics - the youngest specialization for the oldest patients” prof. dr. sc. Nenad Bogdanović from Karolinska Universitetssjukhuset from Stockholm. Professor Bogdanović pointed out that the consequence of ageing society increases the demand for elderly health care specialists through specialization in geriatric medicine and stressed that geriatric medicine specialists should be able to identify unique features of the disease in the elderly, treat different comorbidities and the need for comprehensive geriatric assessment (GCA). Then, in the lecture “Pathophysiology of Aging”, Academician Stjepan Gamulin spoke about ageing as a consequence of genomic and environmental factors and pointed out that ageing cannot be stopped, but the ageing process can be slowed down. In the lecture, he especially referred to sarcopenia and gerastenia (fragility).

Doc. dr. sc. Spomenka Tomek Roksandić lectured on Gerontology - sustainable development of health care for the elderly, and on the impact of healthy living on “healthy” ageing spoke prof. dr. sc. Ivana Kolčić from the Medical Faculty in Split.

The next four presentations focused on the Symposium. Prof. dr. sc. Jadranka Morović-Vergles from KB Dubrava spoke about rheumatic polymyalgia and giant cell arteritis, common in people over 50, and the importance of their timely diagnosis and early, adequate treatment. A lecture by Dr Vanda Eđed, the first specialist in geriatrics in our country, was dedicated to this topic with a presentation of a patient from clinical practice. Prof. taught about

painkillers in the elderly with special emphasis on musculoskeletal pain. dr. sc. Duška Martinović Kaliterna from the Faculty of Medicine in Split. Although there was no direct talk about osteoarthritis, the most common rheumatic disease in old age, prof. dr. sc. Alan Ivković from KB “St. “Duh” and academician Marko Pečina, spoke about the surgical treatment of end-stage osteoarthritis in a lecture entitled “Orthopedic surgery for hip and knee endoprotheses.” The final presentation at the Symposium was prof. dr. sc. Nada Čikeš from the Faculty of Medicine in Zagreb, entitled “Specialist training in the European Union and the Republic of Croatia” - dedicated to the establishment of various specializations in the EU and Croatia. The symposium ended with a discussion (round table) moderated by prof.dr.sc. Jadranka Morović-Vergles, on two topics: on systematic education in geriatrics and the importance of creating systematic communication channels between family physicians and rheumatologists / clinical immunologists to achieve early intervention in patients with systemic inflammatory rheumatic diseases, especially the elderly.

