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The development of pharmacy profession in Serbia: traditional role identities

Much has been written about the origins and development of the apothecaries and lives of prominent Serbian pharmacists, without exploration of an important facet of social history in respect of rise of pharmacy as profession. Several professions' characteristics could be considered as the pillars for any profession: well-defined body of knowledge, prolonged and specialized training and education, recognized public authority and trust, collective influence within society through representative body, orientation towards service rather than profit and well-established code of ethics.

This paper describes the origins and emergence of pharmacy as separate (from medicine) and autonomous healthcare profession in Serbia, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, illuminating one of the oldest pharmacists' identities as medicines dispensers. Drawing on a range of primary and secondary sources the study used historical method to analyze factors that might have contributed to the development of academic pharmacy education, professional societies and professional culture (values). During the Ottoman rule in the central and southern parts of Serbia, there were no pharmacies, and after the liberation (1804 -1835) and creation of the Serbian state, portable medicine chests were first form of apothecaries. In 1830, there was only one community apothecary opened in Belgrade with network gradually expended, without any degree of reciprocity between town and countryside. In 1860, only 9 apothecaries worked in Principality of Serbia (3 in Belgrade) but in 1882 there were 34 and in 1905, 73 apothecaries. Concessions system for apothecary shop, inherited from Austro-Hungarian legislation, kept the limited number of apothecaries controlled by the state and in line with the population growth. When the first professional associations were found, Serbian Apothecary Society (1879) and Society of Apothecary associates (1902) their founders considered pharmacies' monopoly on compounding and selling compounded preparations as dominant of professional identity. Ironically, they constantly confronted each other in relation to notion of service to the community and agreed on less important issues (losing monopoly on selling non-pharmaceutical products, as hygienic products and cosmetics). In considering the issue of education, societies made pivotal role for maintaining apprenticeship and preparing for the *tirocinium* examination, with several attempts to improve training and skills. The creation of the first university pharmaceutical curriculum at Belgrade University in 1939 marked the framing of sufficiently high educational standards. The – four – year study ended with the degree of a Master of Pharmacy. With non - availability of an appropriate education for women, profession was male dominated, with women allowed to work as laboratory helpers or apprentices. The first reported woman of Serbian origin to graduate pharmacy in Vienna in 1911 was Ljubica Jokanović. By transferring dispensing from druggists and wholesalers to the apothecaries emphasis was made on patient safety. All those endeavors in time contributed greatly to the acceptance of pharmacists as recognized medication specialists with a solid academic

background on a wide range of medicines, from herbal simples to chemical ingredients, pharmaceuticals and patent medicines. Transformation from a group of medicine sellers into professionals was achieved mostly by advancing university education and skill to a point where they became accepted by their medical colleagues as experts in their field.

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