

The 80th birthday of Prof. Jozef Vodrážka, M.V.D., D.Sc., and 52nd anniversary of the Department of Pharmacology at the University of Veterinary Medicine in Košice, the Slovak Republic

V. ŠUTIAK, I. ŠUTIAKOVÁ

University of Veterinary Medicine, Košice, Slovak Republic

ABSTRACT: In this article, we deal with the 80th birthday of Prof. Jozef Vodrážka, M.V.D., D.Sc., and also with 52-year history of the Department of Pharmacology, since the establishment of the University of Veterinary Medicine in Košice, Slovak Republic, in the academic year 1949/1950. Our goal is to provide the basic information about the history of the Department of Pharmacology. We also describe the activity of its full-time staff as well as some other people (undergraduate and postgraduate home students, and some foreign visiting teachers and scientists) in a summary form. In conclusion we can say that the history of this department and its people has been very rich and highly productive, not only in their scientific and publishing activities but also in the pedagogical and intellectual orientation of the section. We hope that this tendency will remain not only in the nearest but also in more distant future to enhance the reputation of the University of Veterinary Medicine, Košice.

Keywords: Jozef Vodrážka; history; people; education; research; publications

INTRODUCTION

On the occasion of the 80th birthday of Prof. Jozef Vodrážka, M.V.D., D.Sc., the founder of the Department of Pharmacology in Košice, (he was born on the 5th February 1922), we would like to present a condensed overview of Department of Pharmacology history, especially in the light of pedagogical, scientific and research activities realized under his leadership. The reason for this orientation of our article is the fact that the story of his personal life has already been described by some authors (e.g. Lopuchovský, 1992; Bartík, 1997 and by some others). There is however an absence of the deeper connection in his life between the expansion of the Department of Pharmacology at the University of Veterinary Medicine, Košice, Slovak Republic, and his relationship with its staff. As it is well known, this university has existed for more than 50 years. With the benefit of a hindsight, the history of the University of Veterinary Medicine, Department of Pharmacology and also the activity of Professor Vodrážka's staff can be divided into several periods. On the basis of our experience up to now and the necessity to use the same conditions and criteria for our evaluation, we decided to divide the whole history of the Department of Pharmacology and the story of its people into five equal decades. The reason for such a decision

was the situation when at the end of each decade both Department of Pharmacology and University of Veterinary Medicine took stock of their positions, which is nowadays very useful for self evaluation as can be seen in the text below.

THE FIRST DECADE: 1949–1959

Slovak veterinary pharmacology started its history on the 1st August 1950, when Dr. Jozef Vodrážka was appointed the Head of Experimental Pharmacology Section, which was located in the building of the former library (Fried *et al.*, 1959). In November 1950 it was moved to the Department of Nutrition, where he also started his pedagogical and research activities in co-ordination with the Department of Internal Diseases 1. In 1954 it became a part of the Department of Pharmacology and Pathology and then in 1957 it was renamed to Department of Pharmacology and moved to six rooms in the Department of Chemistry. Since that year it has been on the first floor of the 5th pavilion. At the beginning, apart from Jozef Vodrážka the personnel consisted of several assistants (Dr. Ján Hečko 1950/1951, PhMr. Irena Marenčinová 1950/1953, Dr. Jozef Knežík 1951/1952, Dr. Ladislav Popluhár 1953/1954) and auxiliary assistants:

Rudolf Ondrejka (1953/1954) and Ján Hanko (1955/1956). In 1954 Ivan Berecký, prom. vet., (secretary of the department) also started to work there as well as Jozef Sokol and auxiliary personnel: one senior technician, one technician, one room-help and one animal attendant (Vodrážka, 1975). As it happens abroad, our teachers taught both pharmacology (4th–6th and later 6th–7th semesters) and toxicology. Toxicology was taught for further three years by chemists and in 1956 it was taught again at our department. The education process was focused predominantly on pharmacodynamics, contraindications, toxic effects of drugs, and in practicals students verified the effect of the most important drugs on laboratory animals and isolated animal organs. Pharmacology was taught in 3 h lectures, with 2 h practicals in the spring semester and in the autumn semester 2 h lectures and 3 h practicals per week. Toxicology was taught in the autumn semester of the 4th year (2 h lectures + 1 h practicals). Research was focused on the study of anthelmintics, hormones, drugs acting on the CNS, and on the questions of non-specific impulse-stimulation therapy (Vodrážka, 1980), and twenty four articles were published. Students, helpers and (eleven) demonstrators also participated in the work.

THE SECOND DECADE: 1959–1969

Our department started its second decade under the name Department of Pharmacology (Fried *et al.*, 1969) and also taught toxicology until 1960, when it was reclassified to the Department of Chemistry and Physics, leaving us only pharmacological activities and prescriptions. Dr. Mikuláš Kačaljak (since 1964), Dr. Ján. Tkáč (since 1965), Dr. Ondrej Geroč (since 1965), instead of Dr. Ivan Berecký (in Cuba), Dr. Peter Kucharský (since 1968), Ing. Ján Vnek (since 1968), Dr. Emil Švický and Dr. Pavel Petrik (the two latter since 1969) worked in our department, see Fried *et al.* (1969). The education process consisted of lectures (2 h) and practicals (2 h) in the spring semester (3rd year) and lectures (2 h) and practicals (3 h) in the autumn semester (4th year). In addition, further intensive education of veterinarians also took place. Because of his pioneering work, Prof. Jozef Vodrážka, M.V.D., D.Sc., was elected to the position of vice-rector of the University of Veterinary Medicine in Košice for the period 1966–1969, and our research was concentrated on chemotherapeutics, drugs for the CNS and proventricles (Vodrážka, 1985). Two original critical anthelmintic tests (Cyanazid and Bromsalan), known worldwide, were developed, and anthelmintics, antimycotics, antitympanics and drugs of the CNS were studied. Excellent results were achieved thanks to our technical personnel (six technicians) and students (Štefan Moravský and Dušan Burý). In that period our department published thirty-six articles and

conference contributions (in English, German, and in Russian), and two teaching handouts “Veterinary Pharmacology”.

THE THIRD DECADE: 1969–1979

Although our department began as an independent “DP” at the beginning of the third decade (Fried *et al.*, 1979), after 1. 3. 1970 its name was changed to the Subdepartment of Pharmacology, and further professionals arrived: Dr. Vladimír Michálek (in 1971), Dr. Jozef Korňan, Dr. Jozef Lopuchovský, (the two latter came in 1972). Dr. Lopuchovský habilitated as an associate professor in 1973 (Fried *et al.*, 1979). Then came Dr. Cyril Oravkin (in 1973), Dr. Václav Šutiak (in 1973), Ing. Peter Salzer (1973–1974) and Dr. Eva Čellárová (in 1974). The education process was divided into two branches: professional specialization – General Veterinary Medicine in the 4th year and newly created specialization “Food Hygiene” in the 3rd year, and Jozef Vodrážka also lectured on “Veterinary Pharmacology” at the Pharmaceutical Faculty of Comenius University in Bratislava (8 h/year). He also studied, lectured, and examined in Uganda, Great Britain, Germany, Egypt, and Cuba, and in some other countries. Research projects were aimed at chemotherapeutics, drugs influencing metabolism (Šutiak, 1983), with a total of thirty-nine articles and reports, three Ph.D. theses (Rogelio Cruz, Gillermo Zamora and Jose Marti Corona) were prepared as well as two supervised M.V.D. theses (Česlav Bialoň and Peter Holakovský) and one book – Veterinary Medicine for Pharmacists. Good results were also obtained thanks to four technicians, one auxiliary helper, one nurse, twelve auxiliary student hands and demonstrators (especially Viera Andrejková, Peter Holakovský, Česlav Bialoň, Helena Szabóová).

THE FOURTH DECADE: 1979–1989

In this decade the staff of our subdepartment was as before, however Dr. Ivan Berecký, CSc. interrupted his work at the university to go abroad (Tanzania 1979–1980, where he was Assoc. Prof. and later Prof.). Dr. Václav Šutiak took over his post. Ivan Berecký also worked in Nigeria (1984–1987 as a professor) and his post was taken over by Dr. Jozef Neuschl, CSc. (Fried *et al.*, 1989). In this period “Veterinary Pharmacology” was taught in three specializations: General Veterinary Medicine, Food Hygiene and Biotechnology. Research projects were focused on pharmacokinetics, pharmacodynamics, hygienic problems of residues (Šutiak, 1983), interactions of chemotherapeutics and drugs influencing metabolism (thirty-two articles and three books). Students and auxiliary volunteers were also very active (Fried *et al.*, 1989;

Vodrážka, 1995). The activists in our subdepartment participated in various commissions (in Bratislava and in Prague) on veterinary drugs. They were members of the World Association of Veterinary Physiologists, Pharmacologists and Biochemists and of other organisations (Vodrážka, 1985, 1989, 2001).

THE FIFTH DECADE: 1989–1999

After Jozef Vodrážka's retirement his teaching was taken over by Dr. Gabriel Varga, and the post of the head temporarily fell to Jozef Lopuchovský alternating with Ivan Berecký. The latter was also offered an expert post in Mozambique. After his return, he worked until 1995, when he retired (Berecký, 1995). In the period of 1991 to 1992 Dr. Milada Martinčeková started to work at our subdepartment and after 1995 Dr. Eva Čonková. In the same year Dr. Václav Šutiak, Ph.D., habilitated as an associate professor, and since 1st September 1995 he has been the Head of the Subdepartment of Pharmacology. The education process has aimed at the teaching of two specializations for Slovak students: General Veterinary Medicine and Food Hygiene and two courses for foreign students (a basic and an express one) as well as three requalifying courses from Biotechnology to General Veterinary Medicine (Slanina *et al.*, 1999). We also received six research grants (guarantor Václav Šutiak) and made contacts with Warsaw Agricultural University in Warsaw (since 1993), New York Academy of Sciences in New York (since 1995), National Geographic Society in Washington D.C. (since 1997). In the last decade we published three textbooks in English, three textbooks in Slovak, thirty-two scientific-professional articles and fifteen conference reports, also thanks to two new technicians (Jolana Kodeschová since 1991, and Katarína Drabíková since 1997) and one auxiliary help (Mária Rožňovjaková since 1995). However our subdepartment has been reduced to one university research worker, two technicians and one auxiliary animal attendant.

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Corresponding Author:

Assoc. Prof. Václav Šutiak, M.V.D., Ph.D., University of Veterinary Medicine, Komenského 73, 041 01, Košice, Slovak Republic
e-mail: sutiak@uvm.sk, <http://www.uvm.sk/authors/autori.html>
