

DATE PRIVIND EVOLUȚIA INSTITUȚIILE SANITARE DIN JUDEȚUL BIHOR

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DATA ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HEALTH INSTITUTIONS IN BIHOR COUNTY

Abstract

The first medical institutions in Bihor County appear inside the monasteries or near the churches. Initially they had not a well-defined profile serving to housing the elderly, sick or injured travelers, the poor. At the general meeting of the county on 21 September 1804, it raises the question of financing the new building and because the funds collected were not plentiful, they proposed the sale of the hospitals operating in the county at that time. Beginning with 1853 the hospital grants the status of "public hospital". After 1861, they put the hospital under the administrative control of a hospital committee, which included elected members of county councilors, primary and secondary doctors of the hospital, the cashier, the lawyer and the county clerk, chairperson being the county sub-prefect. Receiving this organizational form the hospital changes its name becoming *county hospital*.

Keywords: health institutions, Bihor, public hospital, pharmacy.

In Bihor County, the first medical institutions appear inside the monasteries or near the churches. For Bihor County there are documentary sources that are still recording the existence of a hospital in the 12th century. Beginning with 1783, they have made the initial steps for building a *public hospital* in Oradea, subsidized by the state. The aim of this *Lazaretum* was to treat the poor and no income people, where they were offered the appropriate treatment, food, and medicine and health service.

At the general meeting of the county on 21 September 1804, it raises the question of financing the new building and because the funds collected were not plentiful, they proposed the sale of the hospitals operating in the county at that time. Inaugurated in 1806, the institution called *Lazaretum* had an initial capacity of 12 beds, which proved to be deficient and they increased it to 24 still in the same year. From the administrative point of view, initially, the nursing of the patients and all those who were seeking shelter in this institution, was free.

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cashier, the lawyer and the county clerk, chairperson being the county sub-prefect. Receiving this organizational form the hospital changes its name becoming *county hospital*. Until January 1, 1923, the hospital was under the control of a such administrative committee, this time from the hospital passes to the state patrimony and is administratively under the Regional Health Department, which later became the General Health Inspectorate based in Arad and then in Cluj. In the period 1930-1935, it passes again to the administration of the county, and then returns to its original form from 1923 until the establishment of the People Councils that will assume the health service for the population. The State contribution consisted in the payment of the medical, intermediate and administrative personnel, the providing of the hospital with equipment and the necessary medicines for the patients.

In 1923, they founded the hospital pharmacy. Since 1928, the *Radiology Department* worked in a hospital, which was equipped with the most modern devices. Since 1931 also worked the department of E.N.T. and in 1932, the *Gynecology Department* was established. Thus in 1936, the hospital had the following departments: Interne Diseases, Surgery, Gynecology, Obstetrics, Ophthalmology, E.N.T., Venereal Diseases, Radiology, overall eight sections. In 1940 was also established the *Urology Department* that worked besides Surgery, having only its own physician.

Regarding the *number of patients* who have benefited from the services of the county hospital we have sporadic data, so in 1827 the number of those treated was 227, in 1864 amounted to 1038, along with the extension of the departments and the receiving capacity for the patients, the number of the beneficiaries increased proportionately, as well. In 1936, the number of the patients cared for in hospital amounted even to 8.000 and in addition, those people treated in the ambulance who were also about 20.000.

Since the hospital opened in 1806 and until 1850, the *Lazaretum* was led by the primary doctor of the county in the person of Sandorffy Iosif, initially and then by Sztaroveszky Carol. The first surgeon of the establishment was probably of Romanian origin, bearing the name Rujă (Ruzsa) Iosif. After 1850, the hospital has its own management headed by a director and a committee. In 1936, the hospital had 21 doctors and two pharmacists, nurses and maintenance staff in total 100 employees. In 1934, in the hospital courtyard stood the Orthodox Church dedicated to the *Healing Spring*, with the commitment of the priest Traian Șulea. They closed it in 1960 and transformed it into a material warehouse that they re-opened in 1991.

World War II caused great damages to the hospital; it partially destroyed the building with the bombs that had fallen on the building of the Department of Interne in June 1944, the patients being evacuated. It was then when they also destroyed the archives of the institution. The years of the World War II were not the best in the history of the institution. The cession of the Northern Transylvania entailed substantial changes in the medical and administrative structure of the Hospital. The most doctors and the administrative staff fled, and the Hungarian Horthy's authorities expelled the Romanian doctors who wished to work. On the vacancies, they have brought doctors from Hungary¹. Some of those who came were good professionals. Some of them have remained in place after the return of the Romanian authorities and in the coming years contributed to the formation of a new generation of doctors. Among them, we mention Csete Emil, doctor-in-chief of the Department of Surgery, Dr. Beöthy Konrad, chief of the Department of Prosecture, teachers appointed to the Institute of Medicine and Pharmacy in Târgu Mureș after 1945. We also make mention of Kassay Dezso, Dr. Schmidt Béla and Dr. Rentz Antoniu, famous radiologist, who as director of the hospital has created a modern radiology department equipped with latest equipment².

¹ ***, *Volum comemorativ cu ocazia împlinirii a 150 de ani de la înființarea spitalului din Oradea*, Oradea, 1956, p. 8 (hereinafter *Volum comemorativ...*)

² *Ibid*, p. 9

The World War II has left serious marks on the hospital building. It was partly destroyed by the bombs fallen on the city in June 1944. The worst affected was the building of the Interne Department in the Street Pasteur. Because of this, they evacuated the pavilion for interne diseases and moved the patients to the Department of Dermatology³. The hospital yard was also damaged enough as the roof of the main pavilion. The war almost destroyed the laboratory of the hospital whole.

The church in the hospital courtyard built even since 1934 through the efforts of the priest Traian Șulea, had suffered, as well. Since the autumn of 1944, it returned to service. If it lived through the bombing, it has not managed anymore to survive the communist regime. By the 1960s, they closed and converted it into material storage. Only in 1991, they continued the church services⁴. Faced with this situation, most of the medical and administrative staff left the hospital even though it was full of patients and wounded. Some of them, Dr. Kende, Dr. Konya, Dr. Mandel and Dr. Fazekas, have remained in place and with the help of some nurses have continued to do their job in the interests of the patients. By the end of 1944, a few physicians as well a part of the intermediate and administrative health personnel came back. The institution's life began to normalize. However, the normal operation of the departments was hampered by the lack of materials. The general dower of the hospital was extremely poor. In addition to the medical instruments also were missing the body linen, gowns for staff and patients, etc.

However, some departments have been less affected. Among them the Department of Radiology, that has resumed its normal operation since November 1944. This is due to radiologist technician Weselény Nicolae who saved the radiology equipment during the bombing. The same happened at the Department of Ophthalmology, where the nurses hid from the bombing the specialized instruments, so that since the autumn of the same year 1944 the Department was able to carry out normally its work with the patients.

At the end of 1944 and the first part of 1945, Dr. Fazekas Ludovic provided the directorship of the institution. Since that year began to be recruited new medical staff, nurses and administrative personnel. Some of them were transferred from other parts of the country, while others were young people at the first employment. In the meantime, the County Hospital worked with a Department of Interne, Surgery, E.N.T., Ophthalmology, Dermatology, Radiology and Prosecture. On 1 June 1945, they appointed Dr. Valer Munteanu as director. He led the hospital until 1947, when Dr. Meer Paul, E.N.T. specialist, took over the direction of the hospital and held that post until the nationalization of the national hospital institutions starting with 1 November 1948⁵.

In the years of 1946-1947 in the hospital worked eight departments, namely: two Surgical Departments led by Dr. V. Arsene and Dr. Csete E. with 110 beds. The Interne Department worked with 80 beds run by Dr. Konya B. having an anti-rabies subsection with 20 beds led by Dr. Szentmikloszi. The E.N.T. Department operated with 30 beds run by Dr. Meer Paul and the Department of Ophthalmology with 30 beds run by Dr. Valer Munteanu; the Dermato-Venereal Department with 40 beds run by Dr. Ioan Bejenaru; the Radiological Department headed by Dr. Kende Iosif and the Prosecture and Laboratory Department headed by Prof. Dr. Beöthy Konrad. The total capacity of the hospital was of 310 beds. Besides the above mentioned, there were also operating for the hospital eight secondary doctors, two pharmacists and seven administrative people⁶.

Also during this period was reinstated the Social Insurance Fund which is the institution of which it arose the Unified Polyclinic Hospital. The Social Insurance Fund was born as early from 1891. On 1 November 1948 took place the nationalization of the

³ *Ibid*

⁴ L. Borcea, *Memoria caselor*, Arca Publishing House, Oradea, 2003, p. 158

⁵ Al. Pop, *Farmacii publice orădene între anii 1919-1949*, in *Crisia*, XXIX, 1999, p. 191

⁶ ***, *Voluntar comemorativ...*, p. 11

hospitals that were not belonging to the state. Among these, we mention the following as being very important for the later life of the hospital. They are the Mizericordian Hospital, a well-resourced mixed hospital, which in the interwar period had 30 beds and several departments: interne medicine, surgery, gynecology and neurology⁷, St. Josef Hospital established in 1931 and the Hebrew Hospital, the successor to the old stationary at the end of the 18th century.

After nationalization, doctor Zoltan Șerbu became the director of the hospital. Under his direction in 1950, the first unification took place, it is true that an incomplete one, of the hospital with the Polyclinic, constituting one of the first unified blocks in the country. Dr. Șerbu led the institution until November 1950 when a tragic accident curtailed his life. Dr. Augustin Pop, the former medical deputy manager, succeeded his leadership. Under his leadership, they organized the health service in field, by setting up numerous points of care in enterprises.

Until July 1, 1951, all health institutions in the city merged into this large unit with a single management, provided by Dr. Augustin Pop. Since then they have created six unified specialist networks. Thus was born the Adult Unified Hospital in Oradea, which continues the work of the hospital founded in 1806 and the forerunner of the today County Hospital. They appointed Nicolae Adam its director, who led the Unified Hospital since 1951 until November 1955.

After the unification of the hospital with the Polyclinic, they needed a number of changes also to the level of the existing spaces. Thus, inside the hospital one has created the possibility of expanding the Department of Surgery by moving those from the E.N.T. and Ophthalmology into the nationalized building of the former hospital Mizericordian. They have expanded the Interne Department to 210 beds with a subsection of lung abscesses and one of slow endocarditis. Because the department has become very large, they decided its scission in the Interne Department I and Interne Department II, each with a separate head of the department. In addition, they moved the Hospital Laboratory to the center of the main building being equipped with modern furniture and appliances. One can consider as an important achievement of this period the establishment of the Department of Orthopaedics in a space arranged in an unfinished building. In the mid of the 50s the department had already 90 beds, being led by Dr. Traian Manciu. Finally, in 1955 they arranged and put into service the new food unit with modern and spacious rooms⁸.

In the first decade after the war, the number of beds increased greatly as in 1956 reached 957. The number of health professionals also rose by 53% and of the intermediate personnel by 55%. After the establishment of the new Polyclinic, the specialized services have increased considerably as well. Thus, while the old Social Insurance Fund has operated a single cabinet for interne diseases in 1956 were 14 such cabinets and a point of work in the Diocese of Bihor County. Also in the new Polyclinic there operated 13 cabinets of specialty on just four before⁹. In the new Polyclinic longer worked a dentist, a sports medicine cabinet, one of cardiology and one of oncology.

In the development of the Polyclinic, an important role had Dr. Augustin Pop who became coordinator chief in November 1955, as he has been making serious steps for raising the Adult Unified Hospital in Oradea. Thus, in only five years after the unification of November 1, 1951 they set up the trauma department with 90 beds, established the oncology department with 25 beds and a station for blood transfusion. At the same time, they have founded the urology department that became independent and benefited of 35 beds. The sections with no beds also developed a lot. Thus, 15 doctors and 12 radiologist assistant chemists surrounded the radiology department, working with seven diagnostic

⁷ L. Borcea, *op. cit*, p. 162

⁸ ***, *Volum comemorativ...*, p.17

⁹ *Ibid*, p.14

devices and two of therapy. The department also had a physiotherapy subsection with five ultra sound devices and four for Quartz. At the same time, they have set up two analyzing labs with more separate rooms for bacteriology, biochemistry and hematology, one inside the hospital and another one within the limits of the Polyclinic¹⁰. In addition to its existing Prosecture department, they set up a histopathology lab equipped with specialized equipment, and provided the pharmacy service with three pharmacies.

During this period, they made important steps to cover the gaps in the health system caused by the lack of specialized medical professionals. Their absence had become chronic. To remedy this state of affairs in 1948 they founded the first Health School Group. The aim of this school was to train intermediate medical staff well prepared for the hospitals of Oradea and not only. The teachers of the school were doctors from Oradea. The first class of the intermediate medical staff graduated the school in 1952¹¹. The number of the intermediate medical staff was increasing from year to year. The same thing happened to the number of the doctors in Oradea who were graduates of the higher education institutions, particularly of the Faculties of Medicine in Cluj and Timișoara. Thus, in 1952 in Oradea were existing 127 doctors of different specializations. According to the official data of the time, if in 1938 a doctor has attributed with 2218 inhabitants, in 1978, he had 636 inhabitants¹².

In general, the health system in Oradea saw in the postwar period, despite the time passed through, an upward evolution. After a period in which they invested quite a lot in this area, the '50s and '70s, there was a stage, the '80s, when they significantly reduced the investments for the reasons of the general economic decline of the country. We should mention one thing from the beginning. In the absence of other data regarding the analysis of the health system in Oradea in this period, we used the official data of the regime. The archives and oral investigations keep for us a number of witnesses, collateral, it is true, about some aspects of the health system in Oradea, but not only¹³, pointing out some issues that even betray the falsity of some official data¹⁴. One thing is sure. Although the data are not real in their entirety, the steps forward in the evolution of the health system in Oradea in this period are evident.

Since the early '50s, they have taken the first steps for a better functioning of the health system. Thus, in March 1951 they established in Oradea "*The Sanitary and Anti-Epidemic Center of Crișana Region*". In 1973, one transformed it into "*The County Anti-Epidemic Health Center*"¹⁵. In 1958, they created the Rescue Station that worked with 10 ambulances. In 1963 in Oradea, they put into use a new building for the Center for blood collection and preservation¹⁶.

Continuing on the same line, they inaugurated in Rogerius District in 1969 a hospital for children with a capacity of 605 beds, while a year earlier they had put into operation a Polyclinic for children in the immediate vicinity of the hospital¹⁷.

An important moment in the development of the County Hospital infrastructure was to increase its capacity beginning with 1974. Thus, by the order no. 13.699 of 19 May 1974, issued by the Council of People of Bihor County - the Health Department, they asked for drafting an implementing project for superposing the Interne I Section of the County

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 15

¹¹ *Bihor-Monografie*, Sport-Turism Publishing House, Bucharest, 1979, p. 153

¹² *Ibid*

¹³ A. Neculau (coord.), *Viața cotidiană în communism*, Polirom Publishing House, Iași, 2004, p. 244-264; Gail, Kligman, *Politica duplicității. Controlul reproducerii în România lui Ceaușescu*, Polirom Publishing House, Iași, 2000

¹⁴ A. Țărău, *Pruncuciderea – o reacție extremă la politica demografică comunistă*, in *Crisia XXXI*, 2001, p. 245-254

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 157

¹⁶ Aurel Chiriac (coordinator), *Oradea. Pagini de istorie*, Muzeul Țării Crișurilor Publishing House, Oradea 2003, p. 159

¹⁷ G. Lalescu, *Construirea zonei de vest a Oradei și consecințele sale social economice*, in *Bihor-trecut, prezent perspective*, Oradea, 1969, p. 75

Hospital located in the Republic Route, no. 37. This operation was necessary because the Interne Department was dispersed, with no overall service delivery of this department. By drawing this work, they performed the concentrating of the Interne Department in a single body of the building. In the newly built wing, they laid out 12 rooms with 1-2-3 beds each. In total, there were 42 beds in all wards. Each ward was equipped with a sanitary group. On the arranged ground floor of the new wing, they put into operation a room for doctors with an area of 15.52 m², one for the head nurse and a sanitary group with shower¹⁸. In 1984, they put into use the new County Hospital with 700 beds, also coupled with a Polyclinic¹⁹. It was at that time, a modern hospital.

In the first three postwar decades because of the above-mentioned investments, but also after the general trend of the age, they have made remarkable progress in the improvement of key health indicators. Thus, the morbidity decreased very much and the diseases considered social knew some indices that were insignificant. Regarding the infectious diseases, the situation has improved considerably. By 1965, they eradicated malaria, while other diseases, such as polio and diphtheria, figure with zero indices set in 1975. In addition, they have almost eradicated the morbidity through tetanus. Serious diseases such as tuberculosis and the venereal diseases have significantly reduced the incidence. To all this the County Hospital has made a significant contribution.

After opening of the new County Hospital, in Oradea appeared several medical specialties. Among them, we include urology, gastroenterology, thoracic surgery, cardiology, anesthesia and intensive care, orthopedics, oncology, neuropsychiatry, gynecology, infant gynecology metabolic and nutrition diseases, forensic medicine, etc.²⁰.

Assessments of the same kind one can make on the pharmaceutical units. Anyway, they proceeded to providing with drugs in an honorable manner, at least until the '80s. If in 1948, there were 29 public pharmacies²¹ in Oradea in the late '80s their number had risen to 36 units of which eight were with closed circuit²². If all pharmacies until 1949, except the ones of the hospitals were private, since April 2, 1949 they nationalized them²³.

In this chapter, we should mention also the expanding of the medical spa service. The existence of the hydropathical and climatic factors in the spas in the immediate vicinity of Oradea, referring to Felix and 1 Mai resorts, meant an additional possibility for the citizens for health care, especially in the field of muscular and skeletal diseases.

All these developments in the health system in Oradea have led, as it was natural, to the increasing of the comfort in this regard and increasing the average lifespan. The '80s, especially the second part of them, however, meant a drastic reduction of the investments in the health service. This has affected the whole system, directly concerning the health of the population. The phenomenon was not only one characteristic for Oradea, but also a Romanian general one.

¹⁸ *Memoriu Justificativ al Intreprinderii de Proiectări Județene Bihor vizând Lucrările de Supraetajare a Secției Interne*, Hospital no. 1 Oradea, p. 1-2

¹⁹ *Raport privind starea economică și socială a municipiului Oradea*, February 1994, p. 33 (hereinafter *Raport...*)

²⁰ *Bihor-Monografie*, Sport-Turism Publishing House, Bucharest, 1979, p. 153

²¹ Al. Pop, *op. cit.*, p. 191

²² *Raport...*, 1994, p. 36

²³ Al. Pop, *op. cit.*, p. 191