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MU-PLEVEN CELEBRATED OCTOBER 31ST - UNIVERSITY DAY

For the 42nd time, MU-Pleven celebrated and commemorated the day when Medical Faculty - Pleven was first established - 31st October 1974. Two student graduation ceremonies - that of the alumni of 2016 Health Care Faculty and the graduation of the alumni of 2016 Medical College marked the occasion. The graduation ceremonies took place at "Magnum" hall, off campus, second clinical base at 10:00 AM.

The 167 graduates were greeted and congratulated by the Rector of MU-Pleven, Prof. Slavcho Tomov: "As your mentors and educators we believe in you. We believe that it will be you who will eventually bring reason, morality and higher social values back to our society. Standing here now, days away from Enlightenment Day, we trust you to hold high the torch of enlightenment as have your teachers and educators done for you for the past few years."

The graduates were also addressed and congratulated by members of the Health Care Professionals Association, the local government and municipality leadership, the Director of UHMT-Pleven, Assoc. Prof. Tsvetan Lukanov as well as the two valedictorians of alumni 2016, Dafina Borisova and Teodora Dakova.

After receiving their diplomas directly from the Rector, Prof. Tomov, the graduates and their closest relatives had the opportunity to enjoy a performance by "Zvunika" choir under Vanya Deliiska. The performance was followed by the taking of the solemn oath of the profession - a sui generis baptism into their chosen field of proficiency.

The second part of University Day, from 13:00 on, took place at TELEC, "Ambroise Pare" Hall, campus proper. In accordance to the Development of the Academic Personnel Act, MU-Pleven has been continuously and successfully holding procedures for developing its academic potential. So far, there have been 59 members of the academic community who have successfully managed to gain the scientific and educational qualification "Doctor" at MU-Pleven. The number of those who have obtained the even higher degree of "Doctor of the Sciences" is 14; purely academic titles are as follows: Chief Assistant Professor - 10, Associate Professor - 53, Professor - 21.

On a special ceremony, part of University Day 2016, Prof. Slavcho Tomov, Rector of MU-Pleven personally handed out commemorative insignias to 36 lecturers at MU-Pleven who have received new academic titles in the past year.



Interview



Prof. Dr Slavcho Tomov is a leading specialist in Gynecology and a surgeon certified to work with the robotic system daVinci S as part of the team in robotic gynecological surgery at the onco-gynecology clinic at University Hospital "Dr. George Stransky" - Pleven. For his contribution to the development of Bulgarian medicine and minimally invasive surgery prof. Tomov is included in the yearbook "Who's Who in Medicine"

and the encyclopedic book "Most Important Figures of Bulgarian Medicine." Prof. Tomov was nominated for Physician of the Year and awarded the honorary diploma and a sign of the Day of the Bulgarian doctor for his contributions in the field of medicine. He was also awarded a diploma and insignia for his contribution to the development of the University Hospital "Dr. George Stransky" - Pleven.

Prof. Dr Slavcho Tomov takes over as rector of the university after the two successful terms of Prof. D-r Gregory Gorchev. Professor Tomov is a graduate of the Medical University - Pleven, a specialist oncologist and obstetrician, Doctor of Medical Sciences and has conducted multiple specializations in laparoscopic and gynecological surgery in Germany and France. Prof. Tomov previous administrative and academic positions include: Associate Professor in the Department "Obstetric Care" from 2007, Head of Operational Unit, University Hospital - Pleven 2009, Dean of the Faculty of "Health Care" from November in 2011 and "professor" in the scientific field of study "Obstetrics and gynecology" from November 2012 on.

D-r Slavcho Tomov is a member of several national and international scientific organizations - Bulgarian Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology; Founder and Board member of the Bulgarian Association of Minimally Invasive Gynecological Surgery; Board member of the Bulgarian Association of Oncogynecology; Member of the European Society of Gynecological Oncology; European Association of Robotic Gynecological Surgery; International Association of Robotic Surgery and founding member of the Association of Robotic Surgery for Southeastern Europe.

- Prof. Tomov, MU-Pleven is the focus of the majority of investments in the field of medical education in Pleven and the municipality. Give us a brief overview and some highlights of MU-Pleven's more than 40 years of history.

- MU-Pleven began its path as Medical Faculty - Pleven and was first established on 31st October 1974. We have made progress since then, combining contemporary educational methods with high-tech equipment and a well-developed base with modern facilities. At present, MU-Pleven has four faculties: Faculty of Health Care; Faculty of Medicine; Faculty of Public Health and Faculty of Pharmacy. Medical College - Pleven and the Department of Languages and Specialized Training complete the administrative division of the university. Students are

taught in 13 different fields of study (specialties) with four Major's degree programs and 9 Bachelor's degree ones. We were the first to implement and successfully develop robotic surgery and long-distance surgery as methods in Bulgaria for both practical use and educational purposes. Since 2014 a new system for robotic surgery has been installed with the latest issue of a practice simulator to help facilitate the learning process. Far from just being the leading pioneer in robotic surgery nation-wide, MU-Pleven was also the first university in Bulgaria to implement Medical courses and education in English for International students. To this date we have 13 years of graduates, all medical doctors, who have found success and professional development around the world - USA, Europe, India, Australia, etc. In 2007, at MU-Pleven opened doors the first in Bulgaria, the Balkans and Eastern Europe Telecommunication Endoscopic Center (TELEC) equipped with an experimental operation theatre, sophisticated equipment as well as the first in Eastern Europe virtual endo(sopic)-training unit - a system designed to impart practical knowledge and experience with endoscopic surgery. In 2016, at TELEC a new system - surgical "table" for virtual dissections - has been installed for the use of students and academic staff at the university or visiting lecturers. As of 2016, one of the auditoriums at TELEC functions as a 3D education studio, where students can experience operations from the PoV of the surgeon performing the procedure. The establishing of the new Faculty of Pharmacy has proven once more our dynamic and dynamic and prolific work for the past 40 years.

- How was the start of the new academic year?

- Satisfying. We welcome 30 new members of our academic family with the new specialty Pharmacy. We also managed to fulfill the state required quota with 450 students accepted on state grand divided among all specialties. The examination scores and results of our new students were also exceptionally high.

- You've build and new building on campus and added a new specialty and faculty to your total. What are your expectations?

- In our new Faculty of Pharmacy will offer a Majors' Degree in Pharmacy to a state-defined capacity of 300 students - that is a total of 60 students per year. The admission examination for "Pharmacy" students is the same as that for "Medicine" students. We believe and fully expect that our new faculty will meet the demand in Central, North-west and Central-north Bulgaria for Pharmacy professionals in development, production and distribution of pharmaceutical products. MU-Pleven will aim at establishing a new type of clinical care specialist who will work with doctors - aka the so called 'clinical pharmacists'.

- Do you believe Pleven has the necessary resources to establish a health cluster?

- In essence, a health cluster is a unification of institutions providing education with health care facilities and institutions in order to improve the quality of medical services for the region and the country as a whole. Not an insignificant addition to this could be the development of health tourism in the region. At present, in Pleven all

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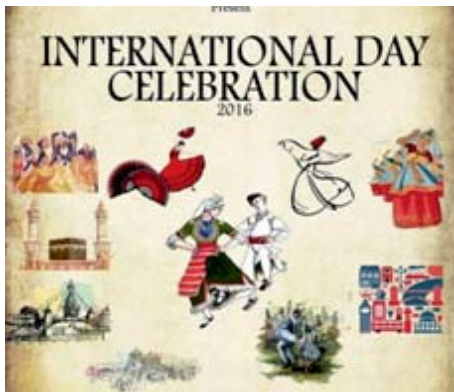
necessary elements needed to form a cluster are present - a medical university with a university hospital as well as several large private medical institutions with state-of-the-art, ultra-modern equipment and facilities.

- What else do you think the learning institution needs to turn Pleven into a medical hub on the Balkans? What type investment would you suggest?

- Speaking academically, in order to continue our way on the best path to progress and turn Pleven into a medical hub on the Balkans, it is imperative to build upon the already existing educational and research structures to reach our ultimate goal – an established university of high learning and technology. Our most recent achievement is the newly opened Research Institute at MU-Pleven. This new structure, as a part of the university, will, on the one hand, allow our researchers to develop their research potential, and, on the other, attract renowned international scientists that will contribute to the fundamental and practical research in medicine and health. Funding is the issue. One of our options is Operational Programme Science and Education for Smart Growth which prioritises research projects.

- When do you expect to reach this level of development?

- Funding education and science is one of the most important long-term investments that ensure a country's progress. Results, however, aren't immediately evident they take 5, 10 or more years. I would like to remind you of a Chinese proverb: "If your plan is for one year, plant rice. If your plan is for ten years plant trees. If your plan is for one hundred years give education to people."



On 12.11.2016, the wonderful initiative of MU-Pleven foreign students gathered representatives of 15 countries in the University sports hall this year as well. The unique event once again showed that the multifaceted nature of different cultures can bring young people together and create an atmosphere of tolerance, understanding and friendship. More than 250 students from Bulgaria, Greece, Spain, Nepal, India, Pakistan, Ukraine, Moldova, Venezuela, United Arab Emirates, Niger, Turkey, Germany, Sri Lanka and Japan organised and participated in the event, motivated to present their cultures through national dress, customs, song and dance, and traditional dishes.

Rector, Prof. D-r Slavcho Tomov, gave start to the festivities. He greeted the participants of the event: "The students of the Pleven Medical University are the best students in Europe, the best in the

INTERNATIONAL DAY – A CELEBRATION OF YOUTH, BEAUTY AND FRIENDSHIP

world." Students loudly applauded in agreement and shared that their rector is the best.

Each team showed love and dedication in presenting their country in an interesting way. Colourful dress, incredible photographs and video stories, expressive song and dance, beautifully arranged dishes reflecting how each nation understand the world created a unique atmosphere of positivity, trust, friendship and tolerance.

The event culminated when, accompanied by bagpipes and drum, a big horo twisted and curved around the sports hall provoking the young people to join in. Folk dance captivated the audience with the beauty, rhythm and nimbleness of the dancers.

A big table filled with multinational culinary temptations, prepared with a lot of love by the students, united the event participants.

A qualified jury of lecturers and members of the governing body evaluated presentation to decide which country would be the winner of this year's event. India took first place for most interesting



presentation and second place was for winners of the event two years prior – Nepal.

As always, the International Day – with the kind support of the University's governing body, represented by Prof. D-r Slavcho Tomov, the head of the International Students Center, Prof. Angelina Stoyanova – was dedicated to a noble cause, and this year they were two. The more than 4000 levs raised from donations and entry fees will be donated to erect a monument in Pleven in memory of Emil Dimitrov, and for

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the treatment of a child in the Pediatric clinic at University Hospital "Dr. George Stransky" - Pleven.

International Day once again serves as proof that, despite differences in their cultures, young people can achieve and maintain model and proper international relations based on tolerance and understanding. International Day has become a celebration of youth, beauty and friendship. The event left a vivid memory in the hearts and minds of participants with its many colours, music and unique air of mirth and happiness.



DEAN OF FACULTY OF PHARMACY TALKS ABOUT THE MISSION, GOALS AND PRIORITIES OF THE NEWEST STRUCTURE AT MU-PLEVEN



On 10.11.2016 Prof. Toni Vekov, joined by Rector of MU-Pleven, Prof. D-r Slavcho Tomov, had his first press conference as newly appointed dean of the Faculty of Pharmacy. He was presented by the Rector of the University, who put a strong accent on Prof. Vekov's biography, a considerable part of which is related with the Pleven Medical University - "What is immediately noticeable is Prof. Vekov's prolific research work which includes more than 200 quite popular

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publications, alongside many books and textbooks which he has authored." The Rector presented two textbooks, part of the curriculum of the Faculty and authored by Prof. Toni Vekov, to the press – "Pharmacoeconomics" and "Evaluation of Health Technologies". Prof. Tomov also presented the new Dean with a copy of the Parliament Decree of 30.03.2016 about creating the Faculty of Pharmacy within the structure of MU-Pleven. Opening the Faculty is in accordance with the national and regional strategic plan to improve health and pharmaceutical services. Creating the Faculty will satiate the want for specialists in the pharmaceutical industry in North-western and Central-northern Bulgaria.

On 12.09.2016, at the beginning of the academic 2016/2017 year, the Faculty welcomed its first 30 Masters students in the Pharmacy specialty. The Dean noted that the number of candidates was impressive – 200, and the first years are students from 12 regions of the country. These facts are proof of the national popularity of the Faculty. The average marks of the first accepted students was quite high – 30.57, which is quite higher than the average of the other two Pharmacy faculties in the country. "This is a sign that the MU-Pleven has gathered quality students," noted Prof. Vekov. He was hopeful that the new Faculty of Pharmacy building will be soon full of young, smart and energetic people since as of next year, the Faculty could welcome 60 students.

The Faculty consists of 59 professors – 26 of them habilitated and 23 non-habilitated – split into five departments – "Chemistry, biochemistry, physics and biophysics", "Microbiology, virology and medical genetics", "Pharmacology and toxicology", "Medicinal chemistry and pharmacognosy" and "Pharmaceutical technology and social pharmacy". A General Assembly on 12.10.2016 unanimously decided to appoint Prof. Toni Vekov the first dean of the Faculty of Pharmacy with a mandate of 2016-2020.

On the press conference, Prof. Vekov described the mission, goals and priorities of the new faculty and presented some of his ideas for professional development of the specialists that graduate it. "We are fully aware what type of specialists the Bulgarian pharmaceutical market needs



and those are certainly not ones that will reach their potential in pharmacies. The main focus of the education here will be the needs of the pharmaceutical industry," said Prof. Toni Vekov, Dean of the Faculty, and added that this he is not talking locally, about the pharmaceutical industry in Bulgaria, but globally. "All foreign manufacturers and drug licence-owners in Bulgaria are obligated to have agencies here that are tasked with registering their medicinal products and study any unwanted side effects as well as the safety profiles of their products. New regulations are being introduced in medical technology which all products need to pass. This is closely linked to specialised activity, which is research for the most part, because it is concerned with clinical trials of drugs, regardless of their origin. This requires specialists who Bulgaria does not train, and if it does, their training is not focused on these types of activities. Hence these foreign pharmaceutical agencies have an unsatisfied demand for such specialists," explained Prof. Toni Vekov. This is the type of highly qualified, well-paid specialists that the Faculty of Pharmacy at MU-Pleven intends to train. Prof. Vekov predicts that there will be demand for such specialists at home in the coming decades, since a number of institutions, including BDA (Bulgarian Drug Agency), MH (Ministry of Health), NHIF (National Health Insurance Fund) among others. Our other goal will be pharmaceutical marketing as it is not covered well in other medical universities and faculties of pharmacy around the country," he added. Rector Prof. Slavcho Tomov also added that there is a plan to open the specialty "Clinical pharmacist" which will establish a connection between doctors and pharmacists with the goal of better patient treatment. This specialty is yet to be developed and marketed at home, he explained.

The Rector noted that the facilities built for the new Faculty are still not in use by students. Finishing works are under way in order to obtain Act 15 and Act 16. Procurement to equip halls and laboratories are also under way and the Governing body hopes that the facilities will be in use by the end of 2017. The Rector stated that no less than 10 subjects will be taught only at the new Faculty of Pharmacy at MU-Pleven. The Faculty will have its own mini production line. Its capacity will be 10 000 globules per minute. It will, however, only be used for educational purposes. This way third year students will have an opportunity to observe and participate in the entire technological process of manufacturing drugs.

At the conference it was also noted that an accreditation process for paid training has begun within the Faculty of Pharmacy and it is expected to be complete by three years.

MU-PLEVEN SENT OFF 37th ALUMNI OF YOUNG DOCTORS WITH A FESTIVE PROCESSION

On 2nd December a festive promotion to celebrate the graduation of the students of the "Medicine" specialty of Medical University – Pleven was held. Following tradition, the day began in 10am at the Rector's building with a ritual presenting of the University symbols in the presence of the academic governing body, graduates, lecturers, students and parents. From there Rector, Prof. Slavcho Tomov led the procession – headed by cheerleaders from the "Lik" community center and accompanied by the municipal brass band with Plamen Markov as conductor – through "St. Cyril and St. Methodius" street to "Vazrazhdane" square. The students adorned the Eternal Fire at "St George the Conqueror Chapel Mausoleum" with a wreath.

The festivities continued at the "Magnum" hall. The exciting ceremony was attended by graduates, their families and students and professors. The popular Bulgarian author, Georgi Danailov, was a special guest. Among the officials were Pleven mayor, Georg Spartanski; chair of the City Council-Pleven, Martin Mitev; chair of the Bulgarian Medical Association, D-r Ventsislav Grozev and executive director of University Hospital "Dr. George Stransky" – Pleven, assoc. prof. D-r Tsvetan Lukanov.

The young doctors were commended for their hard work and success by Rector of MU-Pleven, Prof. D-r Slavcho Tomov. "I am certain that when you chose Medical University – Pleven as your Alma Mater where you would be initiated into the medical arts, you chose not with your mind but with your heart. The medical profession ensures a certain professional development and high income,

following the national rating system. Student-candidates applying for the "Medicine" specialty are accepted with the highest rates from their diplomas and entry exams. The medical profession is one of the few where those who follow their calling and study it have to give an oath before practicing it as it is dedicated to a humane cause – to serve society and the sick," said prof. Tomov.

In his initial address, the Rector also mentioned that the University has gained a high rating among other universities in the country. Proof of this is the emblematic International Scientific Conference for students and young doctors. "Medical universities in Bulgaria are the Ivy league of higher education in our country and you, our young colleagues, should be proud of that. Always remember that the badge you wear as a graduate of Medical University – Pleven is both a reward and an obligation," told graduates prof. Tomov.

After six years of arduous study, the 85 Faculty of Medicine 2016 graduates anxiously awaited to receive their diplomas for the Educational and Qualification Degree Master with a qualification "Doctor". The average rate of the 37th alumni of MU-Pleven was Very Good 5.20, with 22 excellent students. D-r Yordan Hristov graduated as an outstanding student with a mark of Excellent 6.00. He was awarded the Golden Hippocrates. Today's graduates are from Bulgaria, Macedonia, Moldova and Ukraine. Some of their colleagues, from Turkey, India, Great Britain, Greece, Japan and Israel, are to graduate the English course of the "Medicine" specialty in March 2017.

The graduates were also addressed

by Pleven mayor, Georg Spartanski. In his speech he pointed out: "Your success is a testimonial of the student potential and the high quality of education at Medical University – Pleven." He bid the young doctors never to forget their Hippocratic Oath, nor let the grey routine crush two of the most important attributes of a medic – their humanity and their devotion to their profession. "Being a doctor is not simply a profession, it's a calling. From this day on, every day will be a test – before society, before hopes and expectations, before the pain of your patients. I believe you will always pass this test and you will never forget that you graduated Medical University – Pleven," the mayor addressed the alumni. Then he turned to the rest of the audience, "Just a few days ago I was honoured as mayor of the year in the category of "Healthcare investment". I will repeat what I said then – this award does not belong to me, it belongs to everyone in this hall, to everyone in Pleven who has devoted themselves to human health, they invest in it and employ the advancement of medical science and technology. Such investments are beyond a single person's capabilities, much less only mine. This is the result of many years of work and I can proudly say that Pleven is establishing itself as one of the centers of medical science in Bulgaria. I offer my respect to everyone who devotes many years of work in this field. This award belongs to you!"

Special guest of the festivities – author Georgi Danailov – also greeted the future doctors and wished them successful professional development in the most difficult but most humane profession.

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Martin Mitev, chair of the City Council-Pleven, also greeted the graduates, "The success of the future doctors is built on the foundations of the selflessness, experience and devotion of the teaching staff at the University. The insignia graduate of the Medical University – Pleven is reason to be proud but also carries with it a lot of responsibility!"

D-r Yordan Hristov, outstanding among the alumni and awarded Golden Hippocrates, thanked his parents, lecturers and colleagues in a short speech. "You opened our eyes to other horizons. Each of us from here on must remember one – that life is gift from God and it's our duty to protect it."

Full of joy, anxiety and emotion 85 graduates of 2016 took the Hippocratic Oath and received their diplomas from Rector of Medical University – Pleven, Prof. D-r Slavcho Tomov. Outstanding students were awarded an "Outstanding student" of the Faculty of Medicine plaque, science literature, stethoscopes and special diplomas.

Representatives of the "Gena Dimitrova" City Choir sang for the graduates.



PHOTO EXHIBITION "CHANGING NOTIONS" WAS PART OF THE 2016 YOUNG DOCTOR GRADUATION AT MU-PLEVEN



Another non-traditional event marked the graduates of Faculty of Medicine of 2016 – a photograph exhibition themed "Changing notions". It was unveiled on 02.10.2016 in 3pm at the "Galen" hall of the Telecommunications Center of MU-Pleven. Pleven mayor, Georg Spartanski, was a special guest of the event. The exhibition consisted of 24 portraits of Tuition Program for Roma Students at Medical Universities and Colleges awardees. Their education was funded by the Public Healthcare Program of the Open Society Institute – Sofia, the Center for Interethnic Dialog and Tolerance "Amalipe" and the Intelday foundation.

For ten years now this program provides an opportunity to ambitious and motivated young Roma people to further their education. Apart from financial help, participants in the program also get a mentor. So far more than 200 young Roma people have taken advantage of the program to study at the medical universities in Sofia, Varna, Stara Zagora and Pleven. Some among them have already graduated and are practicing physicians or hold Masters Degrees.

Unveiling the exhibition coincided with the graduation of six of the 2016 alumni six of which happen to be Roma, one of them is an excellent student and she is the pride and joy of the program mentors. All six of them were awardees of the Tuition Program.

A short film about the Program was shown to the public for the first time. Stories of the participants were also of interest. The told stories how the Program affected their lives and motivation to work in the field of medicine.

Dimitrinka Borisova, a Roma nurse from Medkovets village, working at the Aleksandrovska Hospital in Sofia was also there for the unveiling of the exhibition. She talked about her own motivation for professional development in the medical field: "I succeeded thanks to my own ambition and a lot of hard work. Anyone can do it if they are ambitious enough." She thinks upbringing and lack of role models is what demotivates many Roma youths from studying. "There are no positive role models in the ghettos and the family values are different. Education comes last there. Many people from the ghetto want to study but can't afford it. What's important is the child's upbringing and what examples it has at home." In her opinion the reason for the low percentage of educated Roma people is because many of them fear that their ethnicity will hinder their professional development if it were to be known.

The executive director of Bulgarian

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Family Planning and Sexual Health Association, D-r Radosveta Stamenkova, pointed out that the message of the exhibition is "to open our senses and accept people for who they are." She proudly said she had been a mentor to five Roma girls who now work as an ergotherapist, kinesiologist, obstetrician, and two are nurses. D-r Stamenkova further explained why the portraits were initially flipped upside-down – that was part of the exhibition's provocation – to free ourselves of our biases that distort how we perceive the world around us.

One of the guests was mayor, Georg Spartanski, he said, "Every day you

learn something, and so it happened with me today. The camera flips the image and so it is with the human eye – the world is projected upside-down on our retina but our brain "rights" them up again. If only we don't perceive Roma people by their exterior and include our brains in that perception, we'll see they're the same as us. I have never been biased toward people, to judge them by the colour of their skin. And further, we shouldn't judge a community by a few representatives. We should at least grant them equal opportunities. The Tuition Program is



a wonderful model how this can happen with a little money but with persistence and conviction that it is worth it."



MU-PLEVEN HOSTED A ROBOTIC SURGERY SEMINAR WITH A PRACTICE SESSION



The Telecommunications Endoscopic Center at MU-Pleven was once again host to the robotic surgery seminar and workshop on 16 and 17 November. It was dedicated this time to gynecology and urology and the first ever in the country training in robotic urological surgery was conducted.

The seminar was opened by the rector of MU-Pleven, Prof. D-r Slavcho Tomov, and Prof. Grigor Gorchev, Member of correspondence at BAS, head of TELEC-Pleven and honorary rector of MU-Pleven.

In his opening address, Prof. Gorchev pointed out that "though slowly robotic surgery in Bulgaria is being established." He gladly noted that times are changing and more young specialist gynaecologists and urologists are motivated to work in the fields of robotic medicine.

The first day of the seminar was dedicated to gynecology with talks by Prof. Gorchev and Prof. Tomov. Prof. Gorchev talked about the modern tendencies in the development of endoscopic surgery on malignant ailments of the cervix and the body of the uterus, after which he had a live demonstration of a robotic surgery using Da Vinci Si. Since

2014 MU-Pleven owns two systems, the second of which is the latest generation Da Vinci Si with a simulator for learning. The Pleven robotics center is among the leading in Europe. In 2014, under the patronage of MU-Pleven, Bulgaria hosted the Third International Conference on Robot-assisted Surgery in South-Eastern Europe with Prof. D-r Grigor Gorchev, a pioneer in the introduction and development of robotic surgery in Bulgaria – as chair of the forum. In 2015 the University won the right to host the European Robotics Forum which will be held in Sofia in 2018. Currently there are four operational teams for robotic surgery – two gynaecological, on urological and one in general surgery.

Chair of the Bulgarian Association of Urology and head of the urology clinic at the "Aleksandrovska" hospital, assoc. prof. Marin Georgiev, expressed his gratitude to the hosts. In his address he noted, "It is important that we recognise Prof. Gorchev and Prof. Tomov's effort in their work as pioneers of robotic surgery in Bulgaria." Assoc. prof. Georgiev said that

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many times he has pointed out – to students and on scientific fora – that “you can't escape the times – they will catch up to you wherever you hide. It is imperative that specialists realise the advantages of new tendencies and do their best to become part of them.” He also noted that this was the first time in the country when urologists get a chance to work with the console and find out for themselves the advantages of robotic surgery. “I still remember a conference in Berlin when I first tried the console and could sleep a wink all night out of excitement,” he added. Assoc. prof. Georgiev considers urologists in Bulgaria to have enough experience in the field already – trained specialists teams have 120 cases, mostly patients with prostate cancer, for a period of three and a half years. He noted that about 85% of prostatectomy in the US are done through robot-



assisted surgery and the number in Europe is steadily increasing – currently at 50%. There have been about 400 prostate surgeries in Bulgaria yet last year, yet less than 15% of them were robotic. He's convinced that we can't evade this tendency whether we resist it or not. “It's only a matter of time when it will be common,” he added. Assoc. prof. Georgiev added that patients wishing to undergo robotic surgery need to pay an additional 6000 levs, so the next major goal of the Association will be to make these urological interventions more affordable.

Active participants in the seminar, dedicated to robotic surgery in gynecology and urology, were 13 urologists – from “Aleksandrovska” hospital – Sofia, “Doverie” hospital – Sofia, University Hospital “Dr. George Stransky” – Pleven, Military Medical Academy and the Military Hospital – Bucharest, Romania. They participated in intensive training in the Da Vinci Si system and received certificates reflecting their newly acquired knowledge.



THE FIRST EVER NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM THEMED “LOKOMAT – ROBOTIC REHABILITATION” WAS IN PLEVEN

On December 3 in 8 o'clock, after registering participants, the first ever national symposium themed “Lokomat – Robotic Rehabilitation” began. The forum is part of a charity campaign started by D-r Anelia Hochwarter, MD, to purchase a Lokomat device for the country. Hosts are Medical University – Pleven and “Hocoma”, Switzerland.

Many of the neurologists, general practitioners, orthopedists and rehabilitators invited by D-r Hochwarter took part in the forum. Throughout the symposium, participants had the chance to learn about the rehabilitation opportunities the Lokomat device provides.



FACULTY OF PUBLIC HEALTH ACHIEVES GREAT RESULTS AT 9TH EUROPEAN PUBLIC HEALTH CONFERENCE



Vienna hosted the 9th European Public Health Conference from 9th to 12th November. There was record attendance of 1800 participants from 78 countries. Registered Medical University-Pleven participants were six and they once again had the most participation out of Bulgaria – one panel and seven poster talks.

The Dean of the Faculty of Public Health-Pleven, Prof. D-r Silviya Aleksandrova-Yankulovska was a representative of

the Bulgarian Public Health Association at the annual meeting of the Board of the European Public Health Association (EUPHA) where apart from approving the five-year report of the Board Chair, the Vienna Declaration, a successor in spirit of the Ottawa Charter, was also approved. Prof. Yankulovska was the first Bulgarian public health specialist to participate with an entirely oral presentation in

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the renowned forum. Other members on the round table were Prof. Makhoul from Lebanon, Prof. Aro from Denmark and Prof. Mccann from the United Kingdom.

The Faculty of Public Health - Pleven poster talks had the following topics:

1. 5-year experience in Ethical analysis of public health cases in Medical University Pleven, Prof. Yankulovska and assistant

professor Anov

2. Regional variations in stillbirth and relation between extramarital birth and stillbirth in Bulgaria – assistant professor Dima Tzanova

3. M type of clinical isolates of group A streptococcus in Pleven (Bulgaria) and vaccine development – assoc. prof. Tanya Petkova

4. Health insurance status of the Roma population in Bulgaria – assoc. prof. Mariela Kamburova

5. Workplace health promotion in Bulgaria reality, achievable goal or unwanted difficulty? – assoc. prof. Stela Georgieva

6. Satisfaction of the employees with educational aspects of workplace health promotion in Bulgaria – assoc. prof. Stela Georgieva

Prof. D-r Silviya Aleksandrova-Yankulovska,
MD, PhD

Dean of Faculty of Public Health
Medical University – Pleven

THE CLINIC OF ENDOCRINOLOGY TESTED BLOOD SUGAR FOR FREE FOR WORLD DIABETES DAY

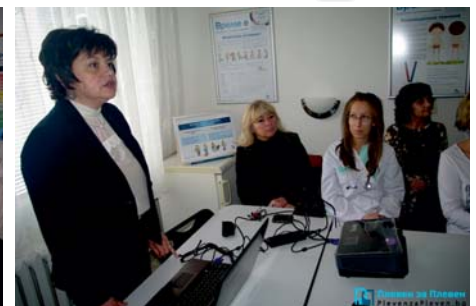
“Together we can do more” and a circle of people dressed in blue are the motto and logo that unite everyone in the fight against diabetes



On the occasion of World Diabetes Day – 14 November – the Clinic of Endocrinology at University Hospital "Dr. George Stransky" aided by the "Diabetes" association, organised a fifth annual blood sugar testing campaign. Examinations were done at the Second clinic of the Clinic of Endocrinology for a week. Pamphlets were distributed to raise awareness about the disease. Head of the Clinic of Endocrinology, Assoc. Prof. d-r Katya Nikolova Todorova talked about the campaign, "We want to reach more people who are at risk and stunt the progress of diabetes, on the one hand, and its complications, on the other, through primary prophylactics. A well-organised prophylactics campaign can achieve this and reduce risk of diabetes and complications stemming from it by 55%." Results of this year's campaign show that 60% of type 2 diabetics undergoing oral therapy have very good metabolic

control. Assoc. prof. Todorova, however, noted with worry that the patients in the same group with satisfactory or bad metabolic control are more when compared to previous years. Data about type 2 diabetics on insulin are similar. Studies show that in the last 5 years newly diagnosed diabetics are roughly 11% for the entire Pleven region.

The Head of the Clinic of Endocrinology pointed out that the risk of stroke or heart attack is four times higher in patients with undiagnosed or untreated diabetes. "This is the point of our campaign – raise awareness – because prophylactics is key." Crucial to preventing the onset or complication of diabetes are keeping blood pressure, weight, cholesterol and triglyceride count at healthy levels, and most importantly – quit smoking.



NATIONAL EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION AGENCY EXPERTS VISIT MEDICAL UNIVERSITY – PLEVEN

Experts of the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA) visited Medical University – Pleven between 30 November and 2 December in relation to the programme accreditation of the “Social Activities” professional field. They met with representatives of the University governing body, with the Commission which prepared the information about the procedure as well as representatives of the governing body of the Medical College.

During their visit the experts surveyed the Medical College facilities, curricula and programs. They convened on the methods of teaching and conducting seminars. The experts met with people responsible for research, representatives of lecturers and students engaged research projects.



FIRST UROLOGICAL SURGERY OPERATION IN BULGARIA USING THE ROBOTIC 3D EINSTEIN VISION 2 SYSTEM AT “SAINT MARINA” HOSPITAL



A team of urologists performed the nephrectomy (kidney removal) operation at the “Saint Marina” hospital in Pleven, the only one in Bulgaria to own the 3D robotic endoscopic Einstein Vision 2 system to use in surgery and its gynecology and urology wards. The patient was a 75-year-old woman who turned to “Saint Marina” hospital's specialists after seeking for a solution fruitlessly for 5 months. She was diagnosed with a malignant tumor at an early stage in her right kidney. A team of urologists and surgeons, under the guidance of d-r Dimitar Tsankov, performed the surgery. The system is designed for laparoscopic, so-called “bloodless” operations which allow for better spatial orientation to surgeons – including with regard to tissues and blood vessels – as well as for a reduced risk of complications because of reduced operation time as well as time under anaesthesia.



FIFTH NATIONAL STUDENT SCIENCE SESSION “HEALTH CARE – SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY”

Faculty of Health Care at MU-Pleven organises the fifth national student science session with the theme “Health care – science and technology” for students studying in the field of “Health care”. The session will be on 23 and 24.03.2017



CLINIC OF TOXICOLOGY HOSTS FOURTH ANNUAL NATIONAL TOXICOLOGY CONFERENCE

The Clinic of Toxicology at “D-r Georg Stranski” University Hospital chaired by assoc. prof. d-r Evgeniya Byrzashka, MD, hosted the fourth annual National Toxicology Conference. This is a great honor for the Pleven specialists, considering there are toxicology centers in Sofia, Plovdiv and Varna as well.

The conference this year was held on 3 and 4 December at the “Balkan” hotel. Lectors were assoc. prof. Vasil Atanasov, d-r Plamen Popov among others. Before the start of the conference, assoc. prof. d-r Evgeniya Byrzashka head of the Clinic of Toxicology at “D-r Georg Stranski” University Hospital which hosted the event, noted that “toxicology is a rapidly evolving science as toxic substances are continually increasing in our environment. This toxic disharmony has a very bad influence on world health.”

Different medical cases and precedents were discussed. Talks on intoxication with medical marijuana, ingestion of mercury, acute poisoning as a result of psychotropic medication abuse, alcohol intoxication and others were of special interest. Some designer drugs were presented and they sparked discussions on ways to improve detection of cocaine in biological samples for use in court.



Chair of the National Drug Addiction Centre shared worrying data – there is an increase of heavy intoxication not only in Bulgaria but in Europe. Assoc. prof. Vasil Atanasov – head of the Toxicological laboratory at the Clinic of Emergency Toxicology summarised that during last year, the consumption of amphetamines and marijuana at home has increased with marijuana consumption being on almost an epidemic scale. “It is for

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the first time that we have an increase of patients in the emergency room for acute intoxication after marijuana consumption. The reason for this is maybe that marijuana nowadays is not the same as it was in the past." Marijuana nowadays, according to the Specialised Institute at the MIA, contain 20% to 27% of the active ingredient, tetrahydrocannabinol, whereas some years ago it used to be only 2%. Some strains of the plant are home-grown and not purified, containing other toxins which could cause poisoning by themselves.

Statistics also show that drivers more often drive after consuming marijuana, as compared to last year. Narcotics are often also consumed in combinations with alcohol or other narcotics. This is an ongoing tendency which assoc. prof. Atanasov considers valid grounds to review laws concerning narcotics regulation in drivers.



MU-PLEVEN STUDENTS ONCE AGAIN PARTICIPATED IN THE MOVEMBER CAMPAIGN

According to WHO data, the rate of prostate illnesses has been increasing recently, especially in men between 60 and 80. At home, prostate cancer is the third most common malignant disease in men. The Movember campaign takes these data seriously and seeks to raise awareness about testicular and prostate cancer as well as ways to prevent them.

Once again this year, by the initiative of AMSB-Pleven, the medical students of the University participated in the campaign. Between 22-25 November the students maintained information stations at the Rector building of the Medical University as well as in the center of the city.



AMSB-PLEVEN STUDENT INITIATIVE ABOUT WORLD DIABETES DAY

The Association of Medical Students in Bulgaria – Pleven and Lion's Club – Pleven for the fourth year in a row organised a campaign to mark 14 November, World Diabetes Day. The students set-up stations at "Katya Popova" hall and at the Drama and Puppet Theatre "Ivan Radoev" in Pleven and at the city center in Cherven Bryag where people from Pleven and Cherven Bryag could have their blood sugar levels tested. More than 1000 people took the opportunity, those with elevated blood sugar levels were urged to talk to their GP for a more thorough examination.



XIX SCIENTIFIC AND PRACTICAL CONFERENCE ON DERMATOLOGY AND VENEREOLOGY ORGANISED BY THE DERMATOLOGY AND VENEREOLOGY ASSOCIATION – PLEVEN

Between 2 and 4 December in Tryavna the Dermatology and Venereology Association – Pleven organised the XIX Scientific and practical conference on Dermatology and Venereology. It was the final one of the year for Pleven dermatologists. The topic of the conference was



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“Dermatology 2016 – A posse ad esse (From possible to real)”. More than 150 dermatologists from all clinics in the country participated, as well as guests from Romania, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, and representatives of 30 pharmaceutical companies.

During the conference 10 plenary lectures on classic dermatology were delivered, alongside 7 satellite symposiums and 10 company presentations by various representatives of the pharmaceutical industry. Modern issues in dermatological treatment and dermocosmetics and aesthetic medicine were also discussed.

Prof. d-r Dimitar Gospodinov invited all guests to the following, Department jubilee, conference, “I'd like to announce our next conference already. It will be our 20th and it will be dedicated to the 40th anniversary of the creation of our Department of Dermatology and Venereology at MU-Pleven. This is a significant event and we would like all alumni of the Pleven Dermatology School, even those who live and work abroad, to come. Leading European specialists have already agreed to attend.”



CLINIC OF DERMATOLOGY AT UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL – PLEVEN AND THE PULMONARY CLINIC – PLEVEN ORGANISE FREE CHECK-UPS

The Bulgarian Dermatological Society organised the eighth annual National Diagnostics and Prophylactics of Skin and Allergy Diseases Campaign. It is organised within the framework of the EPOS (European Initiative for the Prevention of Occupational Skin Diseases) campaign, “Healthy skin @t work”, with 30 European country participants. In 2016 the campaign was focused on occupational allergies and photoallergic reactions with commonly affected groups being hairdressers, cosmeticians, automechanics, builders and others.

Free check-ups will be available at six leading medical

facilities in the country between 6 and 9 December. The Clinic at Pleven also took part in the campaign. Those willing to take advantage of the check-ups should make an appointment at 064/886-696 (until 13:30).

The Pulmonary Clinic – Pleven organises free tuberculosis check-ups every three months. Week of Open Doors will once again be an event at the Clinic between 5 and 9 December. All willing to take advantage of the free check-up should make their way between 9-12 o'clock to the Pulmonary Clinic on “St. Cyril and St. Methodius” street – Pleven.



MU-PLEVEN STUDENT INITIATIVE FOR WORLD AIDS DAY

1 December is World AIDS Day and MU – Pleven students with the support of the Student Council and AMSB – Pleven organised an anti-AIDS campaign – “We are “For” HIV prevention”. Stations to freely distribute condoms and health-education materials were set up at the center of the city as well as the University facilities.



MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Most sincere wishes for health and strength in order to achieve great things, in order to receive and give warmth and kindness! May the coming 2017 be the start of good change and successful endeavours and may each day of it be fruitful in the workplace and bring happiness at home!



MEDICAL UNIVERSITY – PLEVEN IS ONE OF THE OUTSTANDING UNIVERSITIES OF THE RATING SYSTEM FOR 2016

On a special ceremony under the auspices of the President Rosen Plevneliev on 5 December 2016 outstanding universities received awards on their professional fields. Medical University – Pleven was among 22 outstanding universities and won its first place in the professional field of “Health Care” in the standard “Complex Assessment” according to the higher education rating system in Bulgaria. The award was presented to Rector Prof. D-r Slavcho Tomov by the “24 Hours” newspaper publisher, Venelina Gocheva. The goal of the awards is to highlight good examples to academia, state and business.

V. Dukova



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