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## **BRIEF REPORT: SYMPOSIUM DEDICATED TO THE WORK OF PROF. ALEKSANDAR Đ. KOSTIĆ**

In 2023, we marked 130 years since the birth and 40 years since the passing of Prof. Aleksandar Kostić, the founder of the Institute of Histology and Embryology at the Faculty of Medicine in Belgrade [1,2]. On this occasion, a symposium titled “The Work of Prof. Aleksandar Kostić” took place on December 7, 2023, in the assembly hall of the Dean’s Office of the Faculty of Medicine in Belgrade, as part of the annual symposium “Trends and Innovations in Medicine”. The organizer of the symposium was the author of this text, Nela Puškaš, a full professor at the Institute of Histology and Embryology at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Belgrade. The main purpose of the symposium was to present to the audience the rich talent and numerous interests of Prof. Aleksandar Kostić, who is still considered one of the rare Renaissance figures of the 20th century [1].

Prof. Puškaš presented Prof. Kostić’s life, education, and his work in establishing the Institute at the Faculty of Medicine in Belgrade, while member of the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts Vladimir Bumbaširević presented Prof. Kostić’s scientific and research work in the field of histology, which was influenced by Kostić’s professor and mentor from Strasbourg, Prof. Pol Bouin [1]. In the medical field, Prof. Kostić was particularly known and respected as the author of a multilingual medical dictionary [1]. Zoran Vacić, the general secretary of the Serbian Medical Society and the president of the Section for the History of Medicine of the Serbian Medical Society was speaking about establishing the Terminology Unit at the Institute of Histology and Embryology

and Kostić's work on Medical Dictionary. Throughout his career, Prof. Kostić was removed twice from the Faculty of Medicine, first during World War II and definitively in 1952 due to disagreements with communist authorities. Dragomir Bondžić, a scientific advisor at the Institute of Contemporary History, spoke about his post-war period and the circumstances leading to his early retirement in 1952. It was the first time that this topic was discussed at the Faculty of Medicine.

Besides his work in histology and medical science, Prof. Kostić had numerous other interests that marked his life. Musicologist Snežana Nikolajević talked about his love for music and his piano-playing skills. Aleksandar Kostić started playing piano during his high school days. He finished Serbian music school, and in 1912, while studying medicine in Nancy, he enrolled in the master class of Louis Diémer, one of the most famous French pianists and music pedagogues. Almost two decades later, before becoming dean of the Faculty of Medicine (1936–1939), the summer of 1935 saw Prof. Kostić in Paris, specializing in Chopin under the supervision of Alfred Cortot, a renowned French pianist and music pedagogue. In 1969, Prof. Kostić felt able and ready to perform a solo concert, however, due to suspicion that followed him for years, the concert was forbidden [1]. His son, Vojislav Voki Kostić, organized a recording of the prepared music repertoire, and the audience in the assembly hall had the opportunity to hear two short interpretations during Ms. Nikolajević's presentation.

Miloš Spasić, Senior curator from the Belgrade City Museum presented Prof. Kostić's work in archaeology and the museum exhibits he left behind. In the early 1930s, Prof. Kostić conducted amateur archaeological excavations on his private estate in the village Dubočaj near Belgrade, discovering a Roman site with remains of tombs and residential buildings. This sparked his passion for archaeology, leading to the creation of a significant collection later donated to the municipality of Grocka. Prehistoric animal and plant fossils, Neolithic ritual objects, Roman and medieval weapons, as well as everyday items, stand out as the most significant exhibits from this collection, now partially displayed in the Aleksandar Kostić Legacy in Grocka.

During his lifetime, Kostić wrote and published two short story collections: "Stories from the Sinister House" (*Priče iz strašne kuće*) (1928) and "Cheerfulness in the Storm" (*Vedrine oluji*) (1984), both thematically focused on World War I but poetically distinct. Literary critic Jasmina Ahmetagić presented these collections written on the margin of a lot of other occupations of Prof. Kostić, but still very important documentation of a soldier's and wounded's life in World War I.

Prof. Kostić was also a pioneer in medical photography and film in our country [1,3]. His extensive photographic legacy was recently discovered by chance and fully digitized in the Audiovisual Archive and Center for Digitalization of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts. The photos were presented at the exhibition "Secrets from the Forgotten Archive" in the gallery of Rančić's house at the Grocka Cultural Center and the Gallery of Science and Technology of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts [4]. Prof. Dr. Nela Puškaš curated the exhibition, and the exhibition panels were displayed in the Dean's Office atrium as a side event of the symposium.

It was an extraordinary and unique event at the Faculty of Medicine, bringing together experts from various fields of science, culture, and art. A vast audience had

the opportunity to get to know different aspects of Prof. Kostić's work and interests – a person who greatly contributed to the Serbian people and can be considered a historical figure in Serbian medicine and society.

### References:

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