

Jubilee - 75th birthday of Professor Bohumil Fixa, M.D., D.Sc.



Professor Bohumil Fixa, MD, DSc, professor of medicine at Charles University, leading personality in Czech gastroenterology and clinical immunology.

Recently we have celebrated at our Alma Mater 75th birthday of Professor Bohumil Fixa. All participants of this tribute meeting have questioned if the figure of the anniversary was correct as Professor Fixa has been youthful, perfectly fit, full of energy, vitality and optimism.

Bohumil Fixa was born on 18th June 1929 in Výsoký Mlýnský. Initially he supposed to study some technical discipline and that is why he attended technical high school (1940 - 1948). During this secondary-school period he was very active in sport. He took part in several athletic meetings (shot put and discus) and succeeded to win repeatedly over opponents 20 or

even more kilos heavier. He managed sport success without the help of any trainers, managers, working out in fitness training or any other support. He realized that success (not only in sports) could be achieved by means of systematic, hard and intensive preparation, fortitude, single-mindedness, persistence and will to win. This recognition also helped him in his future professional career. Despite of initial assumption that he was going into engineering, he chose medicine after all. He studied at the Faculty of Medicine, Charles University (1948 - 1951) and at the Military Medical Academy (1951 - 1953) and graduated from Charles University in December 1953.

B. Fixa is married and he is proud of his two sons. The elder son Petr is an internist (head of the University Hospital Department of Nephrology). The younger son Pavel is a dentist, running a successful private practice.

As a young postgraduate physician Bohumil Fixa had to serve in the army out of the university centre first (1954 - 1957). In 1957 B. Fixa successfully passed the exam in internal medicine of the first degree and afterwards he won competition the post of lecturer in sports medicine at Charles University. This made him possible to return back to university milieu. Since 1958 he has been appointed with 2nd Department of Medicine, Faculty of Medicine at Hradec Králové, Charles University. Professor Vilo Jurkovič, head of the Department at that time, influenced young Dr. Fixa to devote his professional life to gastroenterology and provided him with optimal condition for rapid professional medical and scientific progress. B. Fixa achieved scientific degree in 1963 (CSc. corresponding to Ph.D.), became associate professor of medicine (1967), passed the exam in internal medicine of the second degree (the highest qualification in internal medicine, in 1967). After the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia (1968) his professional career was slowed down by the communist administration. Final-

ly, in 1983 he was allowed to defend his scientific medical thesis (DrSc., the highest scientific degree in Czechoslovakia, corresponding to D.Sc.). Only after downfall of communist regime (1989) B. Fixa became professor of medicine (1990).

In 1958 B. Fixa started to build up a new gastroenterology department. He introduced all diagnostic and therapeutic methods rapidly and his Department belonged among a few superior ones in this country for decades. They investigated histamine- and pentagastrin-stimulated gastric secretion, pancreatic exocrine secretory function (secretin-cholecystokinin test) and liver functions (bromsulphalein clearance test), performed quantitative faecal fat test, and introduced Wood's sonde for gastric mucosa biopsies and Crosby capsule for biopsies of jejunal mucosa. B. Fixa was the first in Czechoslovakia to use a Menghini needle for liver biopsy (1961), he got the needle as a gift directly from Professor Menghini himself. Bohumil Fixa, along with his long-term co-worker Dr. Olga Komárková started digestive endoscopy using semi-flexible Wolf-Schindler gastroscope first (1959), then the gastro-camera (1969) and fibre gastroscopes (1973). They built up a laboratory of immunology, introduced clinical immunology into daily routine practice and thus created the fundamentals of the current Institute of Clinical Immunology and Allergy.

Between 1967 and 1969, B. Fixa spent 14 months in Hamburg-Eppendorf working together with Professor Krentz and Professor Thiele on immunology of chronic gastritis. In 1969, B. Fixa visited the Department of Professor Glass (New York Medical College). Because of political considerations he was not allowed by communist regime to accept repeated invitations to either the New York Medical College or Stanford University in the USA. In 1979, he came as visiting professor to the Department of Professor Hollander (University of California, Irvine), working there on sucralfate in peptic ulcer disease. At the same time he created a close co-operation with Professor Thayer Jr (Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island) on inflammatory bowel disease. Later he was invited as visiting professor to Texas A & M University (1988) and to the University of Coimbra (1989). In 1994, Professor Fixa worked for 3 months at the University of Bonn (with the support of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation) on studies of immunology of *Helicobacter pylori* infection together with Professor Malfertheiner.

B. Fixa started his scientific work already as a medical student in the Department of Neurology (his student's scientific paper on clinical assessment of sclerosis multiplex was published in 1953). Professor Fixa published five monographs, wrote many chapters for other monographs and several textbooks (of internal medicine, gastroenterology and immunology), published more than 400 scientific papers, and gave more than 500 lectures. He conducted 14 scientific projects (grants) and actively participated in many others, including international multi-centre study Eurohepygast (finished 2003).

Professor Fixa's scientific interest has been very broad and complex, both experimental and clinic, both gastroenterological and immunologic, covering chronic gastritis, *Helicobacter pylori* infection, inflammatory bowel disease, colorectal cancer, hepatorenal syndrome, haemochromatosis and many others. In the late seventies, he initiated and set off plasmapheresis and haemoperfusion in primary biliary cirrhosis and Crohn's disease and erythrocyteferesis in haemochromatosis. Professor Fixa investigated transplant immunology (in kidney transplantation) and immunology of ageing. In the early eighties, he supported and encouraged other colleagues to study immunological aspects of various diseases in cardiology, nephrology, dermatology, stomatology, neurology, gynaecology and other disciplines.

One of the early papers published by Fixa et al. (1961) brought new insights into hepatorenal syndrome. As early as 1962, B. Fixa published paper on decreased vitamin B12 absorption in atrophic gastritis. Since his early studies (1963), B. Fixa had been persuaded of no association between active chronic gastritis and dyspepsia. The paper on morphology of gastric mucosa and gastric secretion in diabetes (published in *Acta Med. Scand.* in 1964 and in the *Am. J. Dig. Dis.* in 1964) has been cited in several editions of the *Joslin's Diabetes Mellitus*. Series of studies on chronic gastritis were published in *Gastroenterologia* (1964 and 1966), *Pathol. Microbiol.* (1967), *Scand. J. Gastroenterol.* (1967 and 1972), *Med. Klin.* (1968, 1969 and 1970), *Folia Microbiol.* (1970), *Leber Magen Darm* (1975), *Acta Hepato-Gastroenterol.* (1979) and many others. B. Fixa et al. were the first to describe proof of cellular immunity involvement in pathogenesis of atrophic gastritis in pernicious anaemia (*Med. Experiment.* 1969). Of several experimental studies it is important to mention at least Fixa's

successful transfer of experimental autoimmune gastritis by lymphocytes of the thoracic duct to healthy non-immunized dogs, published in the *Modern Gastroenterology* (Schattauer Verlag, Stuttgart, 1969). Professor Fixa brought clear evidence that chronic atrophic gastritis (unlike superficial gastritis) is a premalignant condition (*Čes. Gastroenterol. Výž.* 1985). He has also demonstrated specific cellular immune response in *Helicobacter pylori* active gastritis (*Hepato-Gastroenterology* 1990).

Professor Fixa studied several immunological aspects of inflammatory bowel disease, i.e. cross-over antigenicity of *Escherichia coli* O14 and colonic mucosa (*Scand. J. Gastroenterol.* 1974). B. Fixa pointed to possible use of serum lysozyme in the differential diagnosis of inflammatory bowel disease and functional dyspepsia (*Scand. J. Gastroenterol.* 1983). Intensive research effort was also focused on possible role of *Mycobacterium paratuberculosis* in Crohn's disease (first publicized at the World Congress of Gastroenterology, Los Angeles, 1994). A very interesting difference of skin test reactivity was found in inflammatory bowel disease in the United States and Czechoslovakia (*Amer. J. Dig. Dis.* 1978). Professor Fixa was a pioneer in colorectal cancer screening by means of faecal occult blood testing in this country (first results published in 1981). B. Fixa et al. published their finding that there is no relationship between colon cancer and previous cholecystectomy (*Neoplasma* 1984 and 1985).

A very important part of Fixa's professional work was devoted to teaching medical students (since 1957 till nowadays). B. Fixa has been also supervisor to several postgraduate students.

Professor Fixa is a member of several Czech and international societies, among others European (International) Duodenal Club, International Gastro-Surgical Club, New York Academy of Sciences, and American Association for the Advancement of Science. He has been very active in the Czech Society of Gastroenterology (member of the executive board and vice-chairman 1990 - 1998, honorary member 1989 and 1999) and the Czech Society for Allergy and Clinical Immunology (member of the executive board 1982 - 1990, honorary member 1989). He received awards for his scientific work from the Czech Society of Gastroenterology, the Czech Society for Allergy and Clinical Immunology and Czech Society of Internal Medicine. Professor Fixa also won the prestigious Josef Hlávka Prize (1999).

Professor Fixa has been demanding both to himself and of others, of students and the staff surrounding him. He always stressed that it is important to actively pursue one's own ideas, find solutions, solve problems and reach successful realization, and not to wait for somebody else to handle them. This is what he did and what he expected from others. His fruitful and admirable professional life's work is a proof that his way was right.

So on behalf of all congratulators, let me wish Professor Fixa all the best, a lot of health and happiness, and never ending drive, so typical for him. We hope we will be able to profit for many many years from his knowledge, experience and wisdom.

Ad multos annos!

Professor Jan Bureš