



Faculty  
of Medicine

Department  
of Pharmacology



## prof. Hedvika Zemánková-Kuncová, M.D.

\*11. 10. 1912 – †14. 6. 1953

Prof Zemánková was the first Professor of Pharmacology at the Faculty of Medicine at the renewed university in Olomouc and the first Head of the Department of Pharmacology at the Faculty of Medicine at the Palacký University during the period 1946–1953. An energetic and charming young Associate Professor, originally assistant to the Department of Pharmacology at the Faculty of Medicine of the Masaryk University in Brno, became the first head of the newly established Department of Pharmacology of our faculty. She was located and developing on the first floor, the right wing of the building of the original theoretical institutes on the former 20 Fierlingerova Street, now 26 Svobody Street. With one assistant, one demonstrator, and one attendant, she started the provisional operation of the department during the adaptation works with minimal material equipment, but during the next three years both the pedagogical and scientific research work of the department had been developing normally. In February 1948, Associate Prof Zemánková was appointed Professor and Head of the Department. The characteristics of the new institute were two features: youth and enthusiasm for pedagogical and scientific work based on clinical issues and a sense for practical pharmacology. It was no coincidence that the first functional unit of the new department comprised of practical rooms in which the doctors became acquainted with the formula and basic knowledge about the realisation of the formula, i.e. the preparation of drugs. All of the handmade drugs (magistraliter) infusions, decoctions, powders, pills, suppositories, solutions, ointments, and creams could be kept by the students, even if they forgot to give an effective digitalis into 'Rp. Inf. dol. Digitalis titre 1,0 ad 2000, o, Spiriti e vino 300,0 D.S. 3 spoons a day'. This was only allowed once in the semester, usually in the winter, around the feast of St Nicholas.

At the end of 1950, Prof Zemánková became ill with a serious illness that eliminated her from working in the management and building of the department for seven months.

During this time, the department was headed by assistants.

The scientific activity of the department's staff, mostly still students, was, according to the research plans given by the manager, focused on current issues that were in the centre of clinical interests. These were primarily flavon derivatives, especially quercetin and routines. From the works on this topic came mainly chemical, pharmacodynamic, and experimental therapeutic knowledges. Prof Zemánková proved that quercetin, an aglycone of rutin, acts as cardio stimulant, similar to adrenaline, together with an anticholinergic and antihistaminic effect.

Her students focused on experimental serum myocarditis and demonstrated a beneficial effect of quercetin on the course of this inflammation. Other thematic areas that were at the centre of attention were works about the toxicity of tetraethylthiuram disulfide, which demonstrated significant morphological changes to parenchymatous organs and functional disorders of the central nervous system.

Co-operation with the department of Prof Šantavý concerned some of the colchicum substances and their derivatives. The draft of the research theme of rheumatology was fully developed only by Prof Lenfeld, a great follower of Prof Zemánková, as well as a wide range of anti-inflammatory effects of substances.

The development of the malignant disease required a second operation of Prof Zemánková in 1953 that only confirmed infaust state, which led to premature decease. At that time, i.e. in the first half of 1953, the department was headed by assistants, among them the later Dean in Brno, Prof Lambert Klabusay, MD. The pharmacology lectures were on the basis of a commissioning of the Ministry of Education carried out by Jiří Lenfeld, MD as an assistant of the Department of Pharmacology at Masaryk University in Brno, later the Dean and Vice Chancellor of Palacký University.

The vast majority of Prof Zemánková's assistants were avid, intelligent, young men, who, already in the student age, seriously and successfully solved research problems and respon-

sibly fulfilled pedagogical duties towards younger students, as was the case at the time. In connection with the activity of Prof Zemánková, it is worthwhile to remember all these young co-workers, later Doctors and Professors Opavský, Talaš, Kroutil, Trnavský, Zemánek, and the already mentioned Klabusay.

A number of comical events are related to Prof Zemánková, of which I would like to mention here at least two. During the 4th, 5th, and 6th semester, after the lectures of Prof Mělka, students went through the park and up on the Tabulák to lectures, which, at that time, had Olomouc, the first post-war professor of internal medicine 'Charlemagne' Amerling. Once, in the spring, students departed during this transition and came to the II. internal clinic in a flock (at that time, the medical students still went to the lectures in a flock, although they were optional) perhaps with 10 minutes delay. Their spokesman offered a detailed apology for the delay and explained to Prof Amerling the topographical circumstances of the location of theoretical institutes on the then Fierlingerova Street and II. internal clinic in the Faculty Hospital. Professor Amerling, otherwise always calm, felt affected and offended, as was evident from his reply to the apology: 'Gentlemen, do you really think that Karel Amerling does not know where the beautiful ladies are located? That is unforgivable!' That he did not mean Prof Mělka was more than clear.

The writer of these lines has come to a rigorous examination of pharmacology to Prof Zemánková after his usual preparation. This preparation consisted of two different phases of study. During the first phase, a medical student, Neoral, studied from all available sources, surrounded by stacks of books dealing with pharmacology and toxicology. During the second phase, he found out that he could not

make the whole thing and systematically eliminated mountains of books until the relative voluminous textbook was left on the table. The hour of truth had come and one of the questions was: 'Anaesthetics dolorosa'. The question 'felt great' to me and the answer was marked by the findings of the first phase of study, i.e. from the table full of various sources. I spoke in detail about veratrine as a mixture of cevadine and veratridine and its toxicity, according to Strakenstein, which is alarming. I reached the origin of the drug and alkaloids, namely to *Schoenocaulon officinale* Gray, syn. *Sabadilla* off. Brandt. As part of my rigorous performance, I allowed myself to point out a special fact, that this drug is not listed in the pharmacopoeias of the countries from which it may come, e.g. in Greek, Mexican, and Venezuelan, but is, on the other hand, official in the Austrian and Czechoslovak pharmacopoeia, where *Veratrum sabadilla* does not grow. The Professor smiled nicely at me, but she looked at me with an exploratory look and asked if I really knew it, or whether I tried her from the recession. 'It's not in my textbook', she said. Indeed, it was not there, but it was in one of my study sources, in Klan's publication 'Drugs of all pharmacopoeias in the overview', in *Bibliotheca Pharmaceutica*. The professor stood up, looking for a moment in the handbook library and then looked at me equally as nicely, but no longer suspiciously, and besides the writing of excellence in the index she asked if I would not be interested in assistant position in her department. I told her apologetically, and, perhaps a little sadly, that I had already signed my medical soul to pathology and to Associate Professor Dvořáček.

Lubomír Neoral