

In memoriam



Annotation on the naming of the Laboratory of Microbiology at University Hospital “Tsaritsa Yoanna-ISUL” EAD after its founder, Prof. Dafina Hadzhidimova, MD, DMedSc, HonSc

Prof. Dafina Hadzhidimova was born on 24 January 1907 in Sofia. She graduated with flying colours from Sofia First Girls’ High School and in 1926 left Bulgaria illegally for Moscow. Between 1926 and 1932, she graduated from the Moscow Medical Institute and did a course of postgraduate study at the Department of Microbiology. Her dissertation topic was Adsorption and Isolation of the Epidemic Typhus Virus. She worked as a microbiologist at the Institute of Nutrition in Ivanovo-Voznesensk and as a research fellow at the Institute of Microbiology and Epidemiology, and later at the Department of Microbiology of the Smolensk Medical Institute on the problems of epidemic typhus.

In the early days of the war, during the evacuation of the Chkalov Serum and Vaccine Institute to the Urals, she became head of the Uranbash branch, organizing and supervising the on-site production of anti-gas-gangrene sera for the front. There she experimented with new techniques for immunization of horses, which became the subject of her doctoral dissertation Bivalent Gas-Gangrene Sera, defended immediately after the war (1945). Dafina Hadzhidimova was offered a job at the Moscow Medical Institute, which she refused and returned

to Bulgaria 19 years after leaving her homeland (1945).

Dafina Hadzhidimova started working as deputy director at the Institute for People’s Health (NIZPB). She organized the department for production of sera and vaccines, and later laid the foundation of the Institute for Drug Control, present-day Bulgarian Drug Agency.

In 1945, the Central Institute for Standards and Control of Biological Preparations was established, re-named State Control Bacteriological Institute in 1949. Its director was Prof. Dr. Dafina Hadzhidimova.

The equipment and operation of the microbiological laboratory at the Department of Epidemiology and Infectious Diseases were her merit, as well as the publishing of scientific papers in the Bulletin of National Institute of Infectious and Parazititic Diseases, which still exists to this day.

Prof. Dafina Hadzhidimova founded the Scientific Society of epidemiology, microbiology, virology, immunology, parasitology, infectious diseases, which held the first national congresses and conferences.

In 1952, she was appointed to associate professorship in the newly founded Institute for Specialization and Post-Graduate Education of Doctors (ISUL), tasked with organising the Department of Microbiology.

She initiated joint discussions of clinicians and microbiologists on infectious complications in patients, and the sending of samples for examination with subsequent joint discussion of the therapeutic plan.

In addition to microbiology and virology, Prof. Hadzhidimova also worked for the advancement of immunology. Eminent Bulgarian scientists, then young doctors and assistant professors, who had been trained under Prof. Hadzhidimova and had also received specialized training abroad, began their professional careers there.

She also pioneered and promoted sanitary microbiology.

Prof. Hadzhidimova structured training and diagnostic laboratories, trained teaching staff, devised curricula. She published a Guidebook on Mi-

crobiological Diagnostics and Especially Dangerous Infections. She conducted scientific and experimental work, the training of postgraduate students, clinical interns, and the specialization of personnel in basic and thematic courses. Thus she paved the way and promoted postgraduate training and microbiology specialization examinations. She also created a vivarium for experimental purposes.

All professional fields in the hospital laboratories of microbiology and virology expanded, as well as the network of newly established health and anti-epidemic centres nationwide: microbiology, virology, epidemiology, food hygiene, water control, etc. Hers was the undeniable merit of creating specialists for the prophylaxis network in Bulgaria. This was the starting point for trained specialists at all levels - regional, municipal, clinical, before they went on to work across the country.

Prof. Hadzhidimova published Guidebook on Microbiological Diagnostics and Especially Dangerous Infections (co-authors D. D. Hadzhidimova, St. Grigorov); Guidebook on Microbiological Diagnostics (1964, co-authors D. D. Hadzhidimova, U. V. Tyagunenkov, G. V. Mihailov); Microbiological Diagnostics, 1975.

She organized the microbiology specialization examinations and for many years was Deputy

Rector of ISUL.

She initiated the appointment of two associate professorships of epidemiology and virology, subsequently establishing two separate departments with trained staffs and equipment.

In 1930 Prof. Hadzhidimova married her colleague Dr. Emelivan Stokov, an epidemiologist, who died at the outset of the war of epidemic typhus. She lost two young children, a boy and a girl. She arrived in Bulgaria with her youngest son, Vova, Dr. Vladimir Em. Stokov, who survived the war, and later worked as Chief Assistant Professor at the Department of Microbiology.

Prof. Hadzhidimova was awarded the title "Honoured Scientist", and numerous medals and decorations.

The unification of the Department of Microbiology at ISUL with that of High Medical Institute at the Medical Academy coincided with 65th anniversary before she retired.

Prof. Hadzhidimova passed away on 10 December 1984 at the age of 77.

This text is based on "*Memories of My and My Family's Past*" by Prof. D. Hadzhidimova

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