



The MedRi 2023 Conference – Foundations for a New Medical Education in the Republic of Croatia

MedRi 2023 konferencija

– Temelji za novu medicinsku izobrazbu u Republici Hrvatskoj

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Introduction

From March 30 to April 2, 2023, Rijeka and Lovran were the hosts of the *MedRi 2023 Conference*, which consisted of two major events, including *The First International Conference on Teaching and Learning in Medical Education*, as well as the satellite student symposium *First International Student Symposium on Future Doctors Educating the World*. The conference organizers included the Faculty of Medicine in Rijeka, Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso (United States of America), Croatian Medical Chamber, University of Rijeka and University Hospital Centre Rijeka. In addition, the event was organised with the support of the Deans' Conference of medical faculties in the Republic of Croatia, Croatian Medical Association, Innovative Pharmaceutical Initiative and Croatian Society of Gastroenterology. Furthermore, the conference was held under the patronage of the Ministry of Science and Education and Ministry of Health, whereas the Association of Croatian American Professionals Foundation provided special support.

The aim of this Editorial is to briefly describe the motive, aims and programme behind the *MedRi 2023 Conference*, as well as the impact it might have on the future of medical education in the Republic of Croatia. Finally, it is our great pleasure to present the *MedRi 2023 Conference Book of Abstracts*, which is published in association with Croatian Medical Association as a special thematic supplement in this issue of *Liječnički vjesnik*.

The idea behind the *MedRi 2023 Conference*

The initiative and idea for the *MedRi 2023 Conference* organization stemmed from the comprehensive and profound changes made at the Faculty of Medicine in Rijeka in the past two years in the field of faculty development. The necessity for such changes was the inevitable consequence of the fact that, in recent years, medical educators are confronting a complete shift in the teaching and learning paradigms at the na-

tional and international levels. Furthermore, the rapid advancement of new strategies, from student-centred learning, e-learning, interprofessional education to clinical simulation, emphasizes the need for not only introducing innovations in the educational process, but also conducting concurrent changes in the education of medical educators and the curriculum for medical doctors on all levels because the three should not be seen as separate entities. During the process of creating the infrastructure for professional educational development of our teachers at the Faculty of Medicine in Rijeka and establishing various educational programs, confronted with specific obstacles, it became obvious to us that all other medical faculties in Croatia and our neighbouring region must be facing similar challenges.

Therefore, the *MedRi 2023 conference* was organized with the vision of gathering and connecting all stakeholders in medical education in the Republic of Croatia, from students to decision makers, to jointly participate in the realization of the three basic aims of the conference. The first aim was to determine the current challenges in medical education in the Republic of Croatia on all levels, including graduate, postgraduate and continuous medical education. Furthermore, the aim was to encourage cooperation at the national and international level and determine examples of best practices in modern medical education in order to encourage their application in everyday work. Ultimately, the aim was to provide possible solutions and directions for the development of medical education in the Republic of Croatia, encouraging the permanent connection of the gathered stakeholders in bringing about the necessary changes.

Future of medical education written in the *MedRi 2023 Conference* programme

The *MedRi 2023 Conference* programme was divided into pre-conference and conference events. The pre-conference events took place at the Governor's



FIGURE 1. DEANS' CONFERENCE AT THE GOVERNOR'S PALACE IN RIJEKA

Palace in Rijeka and, amongst others, included the thematic Deans' Conference entitled *Challenges and future of medical education in the Republic of Croatia*, which was the major happening of the entire conference (Figure 1). The deans of medical faculties in Zagreb, Rijeka, Split, Osijek and Mostar attended the Deans' Conference, reaching joint conclusions for the future of medical education on all levels in the form of *Lovran Declaration*, a written document by which the aforementioned deans commit to change through short-term and long-term goals. In addition to general goals, such as establishing and maintaining permanent connections between medical faculties in Zagreb, Rijeka, Split, Osijek and Mostar, the major short-term goals are aimed mostly towards improving faculty development, whereas long-term goals strive towards curricular changes and joint improvement of the quality of the teaching process on all levels of medical education. In addition, Deans' conference gave initiative and support to the establishment of the International Working Group for the Implementation of the Lovran Declaration and regular holding of a conference on medical education once every two years, along with annual mini symposia with the aim of monitoring the progress of the set goals.

Furthermore, the *MedRi 2023 Conference* events were organized at the Hotel Excelsior in Lovran and the programme consisted of lectures, workshops, poster sections, tips for best practices and panel discussions, which were conducted through 18 thematic sections, including faculty development, resident education, mentoring, continuing medical education, clinical skills and simulation, innovative learning methods, e-learning and many others. The conference was attended by 97 invited lecturers, 400 onsite and over 1300 online registered participants from 11 countries, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Serbia, Singapore, United States of America, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland and Turkey (Figure 2). The conference participants included medical educators,

administrators, medical students and health professions students, specialists and residents, and others involved in medical education. Online participants could follow the live broadcast of the conference all four days via the Panopto platform, which was made possible by the Croatian Medical Chamber.

Student symposium

We are most proud that a special part of the *MedRi 2023 conference* included the three-day satellite *First International Student Symposium on Future Doctors Educating the World*, which was held with the aim of highlighting the importance of including students as equal partners in establishing joint directions for the development of medical education. The organizers of the symposium were the Student Council of the Faculty of Medicine in Rijeka, FOSS MEDRI, CroMSIC – International Association of Medical Students Croatia, European Medical Students' Association – EMSA and the Student Section of the journal *Medicina Fluminensis*. This convening is a major first step towards creating a deeper bond between students in medical and healthcare professions through scientific, professional, and educational collaborations. The significance of the symposium is reflected in the fact that more than 30 student associations and sections participated in the symposium, presenting their work through 13 thematic sections and 43 presentations. Special emphasis was put on improving clinical and other practical skills and therefore, two complete days of the symposium were dedicated to workshops. In addition, more than 50 student volunteers helped in the organization of the *MedRi 2023 Conference* (Figure 3).

The *MedRi 2023 Conference* Book of Abstracts

The *MedRi 2023 Conference* Books of Abstracts contains 141 abstracts and as much as 291 authors, who made invaluable contribution to the success of



FIGURE 2. MEDRI 2023 CONFERENCE GROUP PHOTO

the first conference. Moreover, these numbers and the important topics presented in the abstracts are yet another indicator of the great interest in the field of medical education in the Republic of Croatia. This Book of Abstracts consists of three parts, including the abstracts for *The First International Conference on Teaching and Learning in Medical Education*, *First International Student Symposium on Future Doctors Educating the World*, and poster sections. The abstracts are published in the order in which they were presented in their respective thematic sessions listed in the *MedRi 2023 Conference* programme.

**About the name,
the past and the future...**

Although the *MedRi 2023 Conference* is clearly not the first international conference on medical education in the world, the name was selected symbolically, reflecting the aspirations of the organizers to gather, for the first time, all stakeholders of medical education in the Republic of Croatia and its neighbouring region at the same place and at the same time. Considering that the *MedRi 2023 Conference* and its initiatives rest on the values of continuity, inclusivity, cooperation, association, support and development, we extend our deepest gratitude to the authorities who paved the way of medical education in the Republic of Croatia,



FIGURE 3. MEDRI 2023 CONFERENCE STUDENT VOLUNTEERS

who supported and participated in the conference and whose footsteps we will continue to follow. The high interest and international extent of the *MedRi 2023 Conference* indicates that the timing was just right to establish inseparable connections and jointly reach conclusions about what the future holds for this authentic, highly demanding and, above all, a noble profession. Hopefully, time will work on our behalf to build a better future for those who succeed us.