

Jela Grujić-Vasić (1923-2009)



Academic Jela Grujić-Vasić left us quietly on 6th October 2009. We had not seen her much in the Academy over the last months because she was not in good health. Nevertheless, both the members of the Academy and the staff felt her presence as she always warmly and humanly shared in the good, and not so good, moments in their everyday work and life. This relationship remained the same from the moment she was elected to the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, at first as a corresponding member (1984), and then as a full member in 1995.

We must mention here her many sided engagement during the most difficult time in the life of the highest scientific institution in Bosnia and Herzegovina – the war period 1992-1995 – when she and other members of the Academy did their best to sustain the Academy's activity. To describe the personality and work of Academician Jela Grujuć-Vasić is not an easy task, having in mind her large scientific opus and work, and the well-known fact of the energy, enthusiasm, and feeling she had for all achievements in the field of pharmaceuticals which she adopted and went forward to face new scientific challenges. Academic Jela Grujić-Vasić was born in 1923 in Foča. She lived in Sarajevo from 1930. She attended elementary school and high school in Sarajevo, and the Pharmaceutical Faculty in Zagreb (1947).

Her university career started there:

1949 – Assistant in Medical Chemistry at the Medical Faculty in Sarajevo;

1960 – PhD at the Medical Faculty of the University of Sarajevo

After that, she was elected to be Assistant professor, and then Associate professor of Medical chemistry at the Medical Faculty in Sarajevo;

1982 – Full professor of Medical chemistry at the Medical Faculty of the University of Sarajevo

1976-79 - President of the Institute for biology, chemistry and specific pharmaceutical topics.

- She founded the Department of pharmacognosy and drug chemistry in 1975, and ran it successfully.

- 1974, when the Pharmaceutical Faculty was established, she was elected as full professor in pharmacognosy and drug chemistry (areas in which she was deeply engaged until the end of her life). She was also the Dean of the Faculty for some time.

- 2004, she attained the title of Professor emeritus.

Academic Jela Grujić-Vasić demonstrated and shared her knowledge at a number of universities in Europe, as visiting professor or as part of exchanges – Lyon, Paris, Bordeaux, Moscow, and Piatigorsk. In Prague, she took part in a seminar at the Institute of polariography; in Saarbrücken in a seminar on chromatography and phyto-chemistry; as part of UNESCO's fellowship program, from 1959-60 she lived in Vienna and Bonn working at their famous institutes with distinguished professors. Due to her participation in congresses, conferences, and visits to institutions around Europe, the academic Jela Grujić-Vasić made a number of acquaintances with eminent scientists in the field of pharmacology through which she had the chance to obtain relevant information and exchange views and knowledge with her colleagues. She was also engaged in the activities of professional associations: she was a Member of the Pharmacopoeia Commission of SFRJ; President of the Section for medicinal plants of the Association of pharmaceutical societies of Yugoslavia; Member of the Medical Plant Research Society; member of the USA Pharmacognosy Society; expert in the Research Fund of B&H; consultant to the "Bosnalijek" pharmaceutical company.

For her scientific and professional work, Academic Jela Grujić-Vasić received many awards and recognitions, such as:

- "Veselin Masleša" Award 1984,
- Acknowledgment for her engagement in the Winter Olympic Games in Sarajevo 1984,
- "27th July Award" for achievements in the pharmaceutical field 1990
- Acknowledgment of the Pharmaceutical Faculty in Sarajevo for her contribution and achievements (30 years) 2005.

The research and scientific work of the Academic Jela Grujić-Vasić was mainly focused on the study of the physiology and pharmacology of the active natural products of plants. Her work, besides abundant experimental data, demonstrates an excellent understanding of related problems, and use of advanced research methodology. The Academic Jela Grujić-Vasić made a particular contribution in the study of pharmacologically active substances of plants: vitamin C, coumarin and its glycosides, saponins and saponin drugs, phenol compounds, especial phenol acid and tannins, and the anti-microbial activity of some drugs. Also, she has investigated human substances, particularly cholinesterase. What made the Academician Jela Grujić-Vasić special was her obvious ability to collaborate with other researchers and to include in her research a large number of associates. In her research, she always used the latest methodologies. She presented her research findings at conferences or published them in domestic and foreign periodicals, so that her results were always evaluated in the most qualitative way. The results of her research activity are: 6 books, 200 published works in journals, 116 papers from scientific and professional conferences, as well as engagement and collaboration in 15 scientific projects.

The Academic Jela Grujić-Vasić made a major contribution to science at University institutions, but also to the work of the Department of medical research of the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and especially, as the president, to the activities of the Board for drugs. Within the Academy, she was engaged in spreading knowledge of science and any activities to promote the Academy as the highest scientific institution in our country. In the work of the Department for medical sciences, and especially on the Board for drugs, she insisted on the dissemination of scientific information in the chain of preparation, production, promotion, distribution, legislation and registration of medications. Working within this Board, the Academician Jela Grujić-Vasić initiated all vital issues in the field of pharmacology and pharmacy, from laws on medication, pharmacopoeia, European drug standardization, and

pharmacovigilance, including in the discussions at the Board meetings all participants and relevant professionals and experts in this field.

One of the most important contributions of the Board for drugs and the Academic Jela Grujić-Vasić was the organization of the seminars on pharmacovigilance. Academician Jela Grujić-Vasić left us quietly, in the same way as she lived her life. There was always a smile on her face, her patience, and gentleness will stay in our memory. The loss of Academic Jela Grujić-Vasić will deeply affect her family, the Academy and its members, former students, and medical and pharmaceutical professionals. We will keep the memory of her in our hearts, but, we will also be proud that such a great woman, eminent scientist, pedagogue and good friend was part of our institution.

Slobodan Loga