

LETTER TO THE EDITOR OBITUARY

MILITARY PHYSICIANS WILL REMEMBER PROFESSOR RADANA KÖNIGOVÁ, MD, CSc.



On the 20th September, 2013, Czech medical community received a very sad announcement of the death of Professor Radana Königová, a prominent personality in the Czech medicine and whole society, respected authority within the international burns and medical societies. She passed away in the hospital where she had worked for more than 51 years, until the very last days, before orthopedic surgery she had had to undergo. Unfortunately, she did not return to her “second home”, the Prague Burns Centre.

Radana Königová was born on the 31st July, 1930, in Prague, into the family of a dentist. She studied at the Charles University Medical Faculty in Prague where she graduated in 1955.

She was placed in a district hospital where she started work as a house-doctor in the department of surgery. After two years, she transferred to the Surgical Trauma Division at the County Hospital in Karlovy Vary (Carlsbad). She fondly remembered those years spent in western Czechoslovakia, and she particularly appreciated the broad experience and scope of surgical expertise that she gained. The year of 1962 proved a turning point in her career; she was accepted into the Department of Plastic Surgery of Charles University, in Prague, led by Professor Burian. She participated in all aspects of plastic surgery and fields of reconstructive surgery, and she led clinical research at the Burns Division. She gained her plastic surgery accreditation in 1966. Burian soon recognized the great talent, extraordinary capacity for hard work and diligence of the young doctor, and he granted her long-term fellowships in Uppsala with Professor Skoog, in Edinburgh with Professor A.B. Wallace, and at a plastic surgery, Karolinska Sjukhuset, in Stockholm. In 1969, Dr. Königová was asked to establish an intensive-care unit for critically-burned patients. She accomplished this task with great skill; the unit, the first in our country, opened at the Department of Plastic Surgery. She promoted the principle of complex and continual care for burns-injury patients, and she developed a broad, permanent interdisciplinary team. She took part in research activities of the department which she thus actively supported. In 1990, she passed a selection-board and became Head of the new independent Department of Burns-Medicine at the Third Medical Faculty of Charles University. In 1992, she was appointed Professor of plastic surgery and burns-medicine. She led the Department until 1996. Nevertheless, even then, Prof. Königová remained at the Department teaching students at the Faculty and training doctors in the Department of Burns Medicine IPVZ (Institute of Postgraduate Education).

When such a prominent person is to be characterized, it is traditional to list achievements in care, lectures/presentations, and publications,

pedagogical activity and scientific research. Professor Radana Königová achieved exceptional levels in all these areas of her work. Numerous pages would hardly suffice to list the lectures, publications, final-research reports, treatises monographs and the chapters in them; nor the teaching-texts, of which Professor Königová is author or co-author, and lists of professional societies, organisations and committees, in which the Professor actively participated. A list of professional and societal acknowledgements which she had received both, at home and abroad would also be extremely long. But, probably most importantly, I would like to remind thousands of treated patients during more than 50 years of her work as a doctor. Professor Königová was reputed as an excellent surgeon and as a doctor with great empathy for patients. She was able to view patients from both the medical and social perspectives. She had taken care of many of her patients all their lives – sometimes since their childhood when they had suffered serious burns-injury causing permanent consequences. On occasions, multiple operations during their lives had allowed them to lead a tolerable life without which they would have been condemned to a social death. Professor Königová committed herself to psychological support of burns-patients within the context of complex and continual burns-patient care. She was also involved, at the Ministry of Health level, in complicated ethical questions that arise in conjunction with medical-science advancement, particularly with resuscitation and intensive care, as well as with consequences of mass disasters. Patients, colleagues, as well as students honoured and praised her for her deeply humane attitude. Many scientific publications at home and abroad are prefaced by four of her treatises, which became a professional basis for the treatment of burns-patients in Czechoslovakia, and contributed to a step-up in scholarly learning for everyone engaged in this field as well as for other specialists including most of the military surgeons who passed courses and practical training with her. Professor Königová very closely co-operated with the Czech Military Medical Service in clinical research of burns oriented towards specific aspects of military medicine. In addition to creating a national concept in the care of burns-patients, Professor Königová, at the request of medical representatives from other countries, contributed meaningfully to the development of a burns-patient care-system in India, Cuba, and in Columbia, where she was invited to advise as an expert, and where she worked for some time. She received honorary membership of professional medical associations as the founding member of the ISBI, EBA, in Cuba,

Sweden and Columbia. In the Czech Republic and in Europe, Professor Königová drew many significant scientific and societal recognitions. Among the ones she valued most is the Gold Commemorative Medal - the Alma Mater – of Charles University. I would like to list just three of the many, but perhaps the most significant acknowledgements, from last years which crown the lifelong work, commitment, effort, persistence and enthusiasm of Radana Königová. On the 6th March, 2004, the President of the Czech Medical Chamber momentarily appointed Professor Königová the first female Knight of the Czech Medical Society for exceptional lifelong work in the field of burns-treatment, to which she had devoted the bulk of her life, and in which had become a respected worldwide expert. On the 28th October, 2004, a National Holiday in the Czech Republic, she was awarded the Order of Merit, presented personally by the President of the Czech Republic. On June 12th, 2013, some 3 months before passing away, Professor Königová was awarded the highest award possible for physician in our country – the Medal of Jan Evangelista Purkinje. She was commended for her lifelong medical, pedagogical, and scientific work, as a living monument to Czech medicine and to its representation worldwide.

Professor Radana Königová, MD, CSc. was not only an exceptional doctor, but also a noble person and friend. Her physical and psychological stamina was extraordinary. She has been admired for her lifelong moral stability, honour, and sheer quality of character. Her work was timeless; her expertise in it respected at all continents. She was not only a brilliant scholar but also a natural successor in the work of her memorable teacher, Professor František Burian. Professor Königová's life was a story of devotion; to her work, her family, colleagues, but above all to her patients.



Associate Professor Leo Klein, MD, PhD.
Brigadier General (retd.),
former Surgeon General of the Czech Armed Forces
Chair of Field Surgery
Faculty of Military Health Sciences,
University of Defence
Hradec Králové
Czech Republic

Received 27th November 2013.

Revised 27th November 2013.

Published 5th December 2013.