

## Editorial

# The Academy of Medical Sciences – a Short History; National Missions in an International Context

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The Romanian Academy of Medical Sciences, a forum of consecration and lucrative activity, bearing an institutional counterpart in every country on the planet, came into being in 1935 by a Royal Decree issued based on the decision of the bicameral Parliament of the country, upon the initiative of Prof. Dr. Daniel Danielopolu. The Professor held from the very beginning the position of Permanent Executive Secretary of the forum, its Presidents coming from the ranks of personalities such as the Minister of Education at the time, Ion Angelescu, and many others that followed.

By the existent law, the Academy of Medical Sciences bore the responsibility, as a subordinate to the Ministry of Health, of conducting medical research and strategizing health policies. Following the French model, which is in fact a model for most, if not all, Academies spread around the globe, it was composed of Academicians from different specialties of medical activity.

All over the world, Academicians have their separate Academy of Medicine, the number of medical specialties being so numerous that they cannot be included in the same institution as philosophers, linguists, geographers and so on, these latter categories of intelligentsia being part of National Academies.

The Romanian Academy of Medicine is one of

the first institutions to come into being after that of France in 1875, Spain in 1910, and among other institutions of the sort with great tradition, such as that of Brazil, founded in 1836.

Unfortunately for Romania, on the 23rd of August 1944, Soviet Union imported communism took hold over state power, and so the Academy of Medical Sciences was disbanded, and all of its patrimony nationalized (buildings and properties donated by some members of the Academy), while the academic field, as all domains pertaining to state system for that matter, began following the Soviet model, according to which there could be only one Academy, dubbed National, within which a medical section with a very small number of members was instated, who evidently could not represent the summits of a so vast number of specialties encompassed by the medical world. Moreover, political criteria regarding membership in the Communist Party also became applicable, politicians and “scientists” such as Elena Ceaușescu, Nicolae Ceaușescu, Gogu Rădulescu and many others being accepted into the National Academy. This was a model identical to that of the Soviet Union but for the fact that Soviet leaders like Joseph Stalin, Leonid Brezhnev etc. did not become Academicians.

A fact worth mentioning here is that at the moment of establishment of democracy in Romania

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in 1989 the only member of the Academy who was not a Party member as well was Prof. Dr. Marius Ștefan Milcu, who had been unjustly expelled from it and, in spite of the communist regime subsequently admitting his innocence, refused at the highest level, when summoned by Elena Ceaușescu, to submit a request for his re-admission. In all dignity he answered to this proposal with the promise to honestly serve the Romanian Socialist Republic, but stating that he will not return to a group from where he had been excluded, a fact that was ultimately accepted as such given his national and international value.

After 1989 Prof. Dr. Ștefan Milcu dedicated himself to rebuilding the Academy of Medical Sciences into what it was before the communist regime, an endeavour he could not see concluded due to the merciless affliction that ended his life in a moment of fully creative activity.

In 2004, through the extraordinary efforts of several medical personalities of good faith, together with Dr. Mircea Ifrim, at the time Head of the Health and Family Commission of the Romanian Parliament, success was achieved, after approval from the two Chambers of Parliament, in passing the Presidential Decree of Law 264/2004, by which the Academy of Medical Sciences was reinstated into the rights granted to it by the 1935 law elaborated by Prof. Dr. D. Danielopolu.

The history of this law, of the fight against the hardships set in its way, constitutes a model of fierce battle, a more detailed account being available in the romanticized monograph “Navigând în furtună” (“Sailing through the Storm”) by M. Ifrim and G. Pienescu, published in 2012 by Vremea Publishing House.

The law represents an homage brought to Prof. Dr. D. Danielopolu and an acknowledgement, in agreement with the civilized world, of the personalities of the medical world, in permanent service to the human right to health, stipulated by the Charter of the United Nations.

We mention that at present, as of the fall of the Soviet bloc, Russia has also reinstated its Russian Academy of Medicine, with members from medical fields only, while its National Academy welcomes writers, philosophers, journalists, mathematicians etc., in a manner similar to the rest of the world (France, Spain, Brazil, China and so forth).

After the enforcement of Law 264/2004, succeeded by the elaboration and formalization of the status of

the Academy of Medical Sciences through G.D. 1306/2005, a period of academic activity development followed, up until 2007, when a decline that climaxed between the years 2010-2011 was observed. Due to this period of inactivity the Academy lost some of its functions, such as the Committee for Drug Bioethics, set forth by Acad. Prof. Gh. Litarczek and detached from the Academy for subjective reasons. If we are to analyse only this fact, among many of the sort, the clear result would be that although the legal basis that helped bring the Academy back to the level at which it was during the period of Prof. Dr. Danielopolu was set, it was not abided, leading to a downfall in prestige of the Academy, with numerous negative consequences (the facts regarding this can be found in the above mentioned “Navigând în furtună”).

After the elections in November 2011, the Academy of Medical Sciences once again began functioning similar to the manner in the period of its creation, in 1935, having full status of forum of consecration and lucrative activity of the medical world, receiving also substantial support from the Minister of Health at the time, Prof. Dr. Ladislau Ritli.

The Academy subsidiaries in Cluj, Iași, Timișoara, Craiova, Târgu Mureș, Bucharest, conduct a meritorious activity, representing the basic nuclei of its academic activity.

The reinstatement of the Academy of Medical Sciences was accomplished by a group of Academicians, namely Victor Voicu, Popa Florian, Mircea Beuran, Emanoil Ceaușu. Considerable support was received from Prof. Dr. Dan Voiculescu, as a result of the sustained demarches made by the President of the Academy of Medical Sciences – Prof. Dr. Irinel Popescu.

The entire process of development of the Academy of Medical Sciences and of reinstating its rights and prestige had in 1935 benefited from the understanding and strong support of Ministers Eugen Nicolaescu, Cosmin Mihnea Costoiu and Secretary General to the Government - Ion Moraru.

The missions of the Academy of Medical Sciences are multiple and bear a strong international echo.

It is primarily a forum of consecration, the most prestigious doctors from various specialties both from the private and the public health sectors being chosen to be part of its ranks. With this elite structure, the Academy of Medical Sciences, subordinate to the Ministry of Health, coordinates medical scientific research by guiding it towards

solving public health concerns and is actively involved in strategizing health policies both at national and international level.

The Academy of Medical Sciences is composed of 46 special committees that, in collaboration with those of the Ministry of Health, set out the priorities of the over 150 medical specialties existent in the country.

Also as part of the Academy is a platform with research centres all over the country, managed by members of the Academy who undergo a prodigious activity in methodological guidance of the scientific investigations undertaken by these units. Many such units can be mentioned, among which the centres at Victor Babeş, Floreasca, Colentina hospitals (where a program financed by the EU with 22 million Euros, non-refundable, is under development), Fundeni Hospital, the Centre for Genetic Research in Cluj, the Gastroenterology Centre in Iași, the Centre for Haematological Research and the Orthopaedics Centre in Timișoara.

An action for promoting a Law of Medical Scientific Research is under way at the moment, the Academy intending to take over under administrative-organizational status as well the entire field of medical research, with the Ministry of Health having a research fund attributed by contest to the entitled specialized establishments. This law is necessary as medical and pharmaceutical research have special features, and the current system cannot entirely take into consideration all of these elements. It is enough only to mention that pharmaceutical research of late has been lacking the possibility of benefiting from research grants although medical drugs occupy a top position from a commercial point of view, followed by arms trade and illegal drugs. Within the Academy of Medical Sciences there are leading personalities of the pharmaceutical field, such as Academicians Victor Voicu, C-tin Mircioiu, Dumitru Lupuliasa, Aurelia Cristea etc.

Due to the efforts of Prof. Dr. Irinel Popescu, President of the Academy of Medical Sciences, soon a Government regulation regarding medical scientific research will appear, facilitating the coming into being of the above mentioned law, essential to the functioning and efficiency of the Academy.

Also, within the Academy of Medical Sciences the National Committee for Drug Bioethics and Medical Devices is currently active, being composed of prestigious Academicians, members of the Academy, and bearing the responsibility from a

bioethical standpoint for clinical studies preceding the introduction to common medical use of any drug or medical device. It is a mission of great responsibility both nationally and due to the involvement of this Committee in the international arena, according to EU regulations. The Committee is led by Acad. Dinu Antonescu.

In accordance with the latest G.D. 877/2013, regarding the modification of the Academy's status, the Committee of Ethics and Medical Deontology was also inaugurated, with Acad. Victor Voicu as President and Acad. Ioan Pop as Vice-president. The purpose of this Committee is to ensure that Academicians respect the norms of morality of the Academy, and a set of rules concerning this has been approved by the General Assembly in November 2013, stipulating that any discoveries of plagiarism, actions against the Academy or previous collaboration with the Securitate shall be sanctioned to full extent, by exclusion from the Academy.

The Academy received special support from Acad. Prof. Dr. Sorin Oprescu, who contributed directly to the development of scientific research as part of the A.M.S. - Colentina Research Centre and by recovering certain spaces, one of which is filled with history and located within Colțea Hospital, where the first headquarters of the Academy could be found in 1935.

We must mention as well the Academy's significant involvement in promoting alternative medicine (complementary, traditional), which besides an unquestionable efficiency in some afflictions, also presents much lower treatment costs. We would also like to highlight that, in Europe, legislation regulation of alternative medicine is a concept encountered only in Switzerland, Germany and Romania, and the U.S. together with China and Japan occupy first place in promoting this concept of alternative medicine, which along with Western medicine takes the name of integrative medicine.

At the same time, the Academy of Medical Sciences was involved in the entire legislation activity of the Ministry of Health, submitting proposals which were first discussed by the specialized committees of the Academy, and then presented to the Minister. We would underline the fact that among other propositions there are those regarding the new Health Law, many of these propositions having been elaborated by the Minister of Health himself. Specialists from the Academy were invited and actively participate in various collectives of the Ministry focused on

legislation and European integration issues. We offer but a few names of those among them: Academicians Dan Enescu, Emanoil Ceaușu, Dan Farcaș, Radu Negoescu etc.

A significant contribution to raising the level of the Academy was that of Acad. Prof. Dr. Dorinel Sarafoleanu, due to whom a fruitful collaboration with Prof. Dr. Stephen Hillier, Rector of the Medical School in Edinburgh, UK, one of the top 20 best universities in the world, was initiated. Prof. Stephen Hillier was profoundly impressed by the Research Centre for Alternative Medicine of the Academy of Medical Sciences, establishing a clear protocol for collaboration between the University he runs and the Romanian centre, competently led by Acad. Prof. Dr. Florin Brătilă and Dr. Cornel Moldovan. In the same context we mention the accomplishment of Acad. Prof. Dr. Nicolae Manolescu, President of the Veterinary Medicine Department of the A.M.S., who created the forum "Only One Health" affiliated to the similar counterpart of the European Union, by which human and veterinary medicine are seen as one, and focusing on prophylaxis, as the newest acquisitions of the medical world, requiring non-refundable grants from the EU, are taken into high account.

Another priority of the Academy of Medical Sciences was represented by international collaboration, taken directly under charge by the President of the Academy, Prof. Dr. Irinel Popescu. Collaboration connections were extended throughout the globe, some examples of this being the collaboration with the Medical Academies of Malaysia, Poland, Brazil and many more.

A special mention must be made regarding the collaboration with the French Academy of Medicine, of which the President of the Romanian Academy of Medical Sciences has been chosen to be a member.

During the discussions had with the Honorary President of the Academy of Medicine of France, discussions facilitated by Acad. Prof. Dr. Nicolae Manolescu, I have come to understand the aspects which must be regarded as priorities by an Academy of Medicine, all the more as the Academy of

Medical Sciences founded by Prof. D. Danielopolu in 1935 followed the model of the French Academy of Medicine. An interesting aspect while discussing the terminology of the title "Academician" was that Prof. Dr. Andrei Parodi, expressing his astonishment regarding this aspect, stressed the fact that it is normal for a member of an Academy to be addressed as "Academician", this being the only title available in dictionaries, but at the same time it is mandatory that in the entire civilized world one also add the specific Academy to which the member pertains, as well as the nature of his membership status (titular, correspondent or honorary). The discussions revealed that the simple title "Academician", with no further clarifications, is of Soviet origin (академик – academic), and at present Russia has reinstated to their lawful rights all of its medical Academicians, re-establishing the Russian Academy of Medicine.

A special accomplishment to be mentioned is the fact that Bucharest hosted in 2014 the Congress of the Federation of European Academies of Medicine. The credits for this prestigious action are to be exclusively attributed to the President of the Romanian Academy of Medical Sciences, Prof. Dr. Irinel Popescu, who was elected Vice-president of the F.E.A.M. as well.

In the future the Academy of Medical Sciences obviously plans to expand international collaborations, to publish an encyclopaedia of Romanian medicine and an annual with all the members of the Academy, missions that have been succeeded by all Academies of Medicine over the world.

At the same time, the Academy of Medical Sciences together with the College of Physicians will continue militating for raising the prestige of the medical profession and for defending the human right to health. The present Journal, come into being through the collaboration of the Bucharest College of Physicians, led by Acad. Prof. Dr. Ioan Lascăr, and of the Academy of Medical Sciences aims to meet the necessary requirements to be included in international databases (I.S.I. Thomson etc.) and represents a meritorious step towards a direction which is a priority for the medical domain.