

FORGOTTEN PEOPLE IN LATVIAN PHARMACY – TAMĀRA KLIMOVIČA

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Introduction

The history of pharmacy in Latvia is one of the continuous developments towards greater professional standing through changes in pharmacy education and practice. Furthermore, history of pharmacy participates in creating the necessary perspective for shaping the future of pharmacy in the next decades. At the same time the recent past, e.g., Soviet and post-Soviet periods are not very well documented by the Latvian pharmacy historians.

Aim of the project

The aim of the project was to analyse the life and work Tamāra Klimoviča in order to better understand situation in Latvian pharmacy practice during the Soviet times and first years after gaining the independence.



Materials and methods

We used biographical approach in order to develop a better understanding of one of the key persons in Latvian pharmacy during Soviet times and historical processes to develop a better understanding of the relations between her life, the social structures and historical processes within which it take shape.

Results

The Latvian pharmacist Tamāra Klimoviča (1927.-2010.) was one of the key persons in Latvian pharmacy during the Soviet times and the first decade after the independence. She was born in Riga, studied in the 3rd and A.Saulietis elementary schools and in N.Draudzina 7th secondary school but later in the Faculty of Chemistry at the Latvian State University. There were two main study areas in pharmacy at that time: practical pharmacy and industrial pharmacy.

Results

Klimoviča chose the practical pharmacy programme because graduates could work in pharmacies, laboratories and as forensic chemistry specialists. She graduated the Latvian State University in 1951 but got a diploma of the Riga Medical Institute because a Practical pharmacy programme became an integral part of the Riga Medical Institute (established in 1950). Her teachers, e.g., J.Maizīte, E.Svirlovskis, V.Šķilters were reputable pharmacists and scientists with a rich teaching and scientific experience both in Russian and European universities and different pharmaceutical institutions. After graduation she started her work in a big on-call pharmacy No 139 in Jelgava. (During Soviet times all pharmacies had numbers) At that time the General Pharmacy administration (GAP) had 4 local departments in Riga, Cēsis (later merged with Riga department), Daugavpils and Liepaja and these departments did inventories in pharmacies and other pharmaceutical companies. Klimoviča became an inspector at the Riga department in 1952. In 1954 she became a senior inspector, a deputy director in 1956 and a director of the GAP in 1961. She held this position till 1992 (at that time the GAP was reorganised into the republican company "Pharmacy").

Both in that times and after the restoration of independence of the Republic of medicines shortages were essential problem. Even essential medications were centrally received only once a year. Klimoviča was excellent manager and this talent helped her solve medication shortages problem at least partly. There was a big medication shortage in the begging of 1990s that was partly because of Yeltsin's embargo. Latvia could not receive medications from the Russia and had also very limited financial resources. Klimoviča together with the Minister of Welfare T.Eniņš and the first President of the restored Latvian Medical Association I.Krastiņš with a help of Latvian Physician and Dentist association and the Latvian Medicine Fund went to Canada and the USA to meet representatives of governments, Wold Bank, pharmaceutical companies, "Project Hope". There was also Latvian exiles financial support and finally Latvia could solve medication shortages problem at least partly. According to memories of pharmacists who worked with Klimoviča she was firm but fair, never humiliated a pharmacist in the presence of others but talked individually and always kept high pharmacy standards asking the same from other pharmacy specialists. During the Barricades in 1991 she supported declared restoration of independence of Latvia from the Soviet Union. From 1992-2004 she worked in the pharmaceutical company Schering. She has received "Life-long achievements in pharmacy" award in 2003 (Pharmacists' Society of Latvia) and several awards during Soviet period.

Conclusions

Although she was an essential person in Latvian pharmacy there is very limited information left about her life and work both in the Latvian Archive and the Pauls Stradins Museum for History of Medicine as well as in the press.

Photo from: http://dati.mic.lv/main/zinasaw/5_1/4834/07/arch_2010