

EDITORIAL



Associate Professor, JULIAN PODOBA, MD., PhD.
IN HONOR OF THE 100th ANNIVERSARY OF HIS BIRTH

Julian Podoba was an internationally recognized representative of the Slovak medical and scientific communities at the field of endocrinology, regarding mainly the thyroid diseases, associated with the iodine deficiency disorders (IDD), especially the goiter. In 1951, he introduced the IDD prophylaxis with iodinated salt in Slovakia. He was the FOUNDER of the Institute of Endocrinology in Bratislava (today known as Institute of Experimental Endocrinology, Slovak Academy of Sciences) and of the Slovak Endocrine Society at the time when Slovakia was a part of the joined Slovak-Czech country, Czechoslovakia. In the years 1968–1972, J. Podoba was a member of the Executive Committee of the European Thyroid Association.

Julian Podoba was born in 1916 in a small village, Ostratice, Slovakia. From 1934 to 1940, he attended, the Medical Faculty of Comenius University (MF CO) in Bratislava. In 1943, he joined the medical team of prof. Ladislav Derer, the founder of modern internal medicine in Slovakia, at the University Hospital in Bratislava. He acquired a large amount of experience in endocrinology at stays (1945–1948) in the 3rd Clinic of Internal Medicine (prof. Josef Pelnar) in Prague and later, in the medical team of professor Josef Charvat and associate professor Karel Silink, founders of a modern endocrinology at Charles University in Prague. After returning to Bratislava, J. Podoba, as an assistant in the 1st Internal Clinic of MF CU (1948–1952), became a pioneer of the modern endocrinology understanding in Slovakia. At that time, he also completed several short stays in foreign endocrinological and clinical workplaces, including Germany, France, USA, Poland, and Romania. He passed away in 2005.

In 1949, he recruited a group of specialists to survey the cause of the thyroid gland ailment – endemic goiter, leading in some cases into a cretinism, occurring in various parts of Slovakia. During this survey, more than 168 000 peoples were examined. The importance of the preliminary data, received from IDD surveys in Slovakia, resulted in the foundation of the Institute of Endocrinology in 1951 by the Ministry of Health and J. Podoba was entrusted by its leading as the first director. The research team of the Institute completed the IDD field surveys initiated in 1949 and kept the responsibility of supervising the iodine prophylaxis program until 1969. As a result, the iodine intake increased 3–4-times and endemic goiter and cretinism gradually but radically disappeared.

Under the leadership of J. Podoba, in 1954, the Institute of Endocrinology was incorporated into the newly founded Slovak Academy of Sciences and in 1967, it was renamed as Institute of Experimental Endocrinology. The Institute of Experimental Endocrinology became a center for the studies performed on the negative effects of the environmental factors like the stress conditions and the nutritional status on the thyroid function. The experience of the Institute was acknowledged in 2000 by the European Commission and honored as a “Center of Excellence”.

The extensive work and research achievements of J. Podoba reached high recognition not only in Czechoslovakia but also abroad. He presented his research and medical findings on prestige international symposia and conferences. He was the author of several monographies: Endemic goiter in Slovakia (1962), Naturally occurring goitrogens and thyroid function (1964), Goitre prevention (1971), Thyroid gland diseases (1980), and wrote many chapters in textbooks dealing with internal medicine and endocrinology. He published more than 250 publications in national and international journals, majority of them related to the IDD and its prophylaxis. In 1960, he received PhD. degree and 1968, he became associate professor at Comenius University in Bratislava. In 1967–1975, he served as the President of the Slovak Endocrine Society and Vice-president of the Czechoslovak Society of Endocrinology. He was elected as a member of the European Thyroid Association (ETA) Executive Committee (1968–1972) and in 1974, he hosted the 8th meeting of the ETA in Prague with the Czechoslovak Medical Society J.E. Purkyne and the Czechoslovak Society of Endocrinology. J. Podoba also established and for a long time managed the 1st Czechoslovak endocrinological journal – *Endocrinologia Experimentalis*, at the present, *Endocrine Regulations*.

It is very impressive and grandiose that Julian Podoba had so strong spirit and courage to introduce and perform epidemiologic studies on IDD and successfully to fill up an extensive program of iodine prophylaxis in Slovakia under, at that time, very hardscrabble working conditions. His life-long excellent work was esteemed with the highest state and scientific prizes, as the Czechoslovakian state medal “For merit of building” (1964), the Golden medal of Jan Evangelista Purkyne (1966), the Golden medal of the Slovak Medical Society (1976), the Golden medal of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (1983), and the Cross of the President of the Slovak Republic (2003).

We truly admire and appreciate the scientific-medical and human achievements of Julian Podoba who promoted our Institute among the internationally well-honored institutions at the field of experimental endocrinology. His initiation and realization of the prophylactic-therapeutic campaign, i.e. iodine prophylaxis of endemic goiter, in Slovakia, belongs to the one of the most important achievements assigned to the human health benefit in this country and it never will be forgotten.

Dr. Alexander Kiss, PhD., DSc.
Chief Editor