

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

BRIGADIER GENERAL (RET.) ASSOC. PROF. LEO KLEIN, MD, CSC., WAS AWARDED HONORARY MEMBERSHIP OF THE J. E. PURKINJE CZECH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION AND THE COMMEMORATIVE MEDAL OF THE MILITARY MEDICAL CORPS

On 15th November, 2017, the 17th Conference of the Society of Military Physicians, Pharmacists and Veterinarians of the J. E. Purkinje Czech Medical Association was held in Hradec Králové. With the abundant participation of more than 90 registered participants, a festive block was included in the opening ceremonial, where various awards were presented to several members of our Society. Among them, there was also a founding member of the Society and the long-time chairman of its committee, retired Brigadier General, Assoc. Prof. Leo Klein, MD, CSC., who was awarded Honorary Membership of the J. E. Purkinje Czech Medical Association and the Commemorative Medal of the Military Medical Corps. On this occasion, we would like to briefly outline his life and career.

A native of Olomouc, who grew up in nearby Prostějov, had a clear life idea and a goal to become a military doctor since his youth. He was active in the military medical service for more than 34 years, holding a number of functions in their course, ranging from basic to top-level ones. He studied medicine in Hradec Králové as a student of the Military Medical Academy of J. E. Purkinje at the Faculty of Medicine of the Charles University. After his



Figure 1. Brig. Gen. (ret.) Leo Klein receiving the Honorary Membership award

graduation in 1976, he attended post-graduate training at the Olomouc Military Hospital and was subsequently appointed Troop Medical Officer, later Chief Troop Medical Officer of the Heavy Artillery Brigade in the Hranice garrison. He worked there for 3 years and, given his continuing interest in surgical fields, he joined Olomouc Military Hospital in 1980, first as a surgeon of the medical battalion and later on in the Surgery Department of the Military Hospital. Here he had the opportunity to become acquainted with the treatment of burns and the field of plastic surgery, which attracted him so much that in 1984, after a successful competition, he joined the Department of Field Surgery of the Purkinje Military Medical Academy in Hradec Králové, where a specialized workplace began to form. Since then, the professional life of Dr. Klein has been connected with Hradec Králové. He has worked actively in the fields of pedagogy, scientific research, and publication at the military academy and in the clinical activities at the Surgical Department of the Faculty Hospital, where he initially built, later became the head of the Division of Plastic Surgery and Burns Treatment. He defended his dissertation in 1994 and habilitated in the field of surgery in 1998. After the Czech Republic's accession to NATO, he was elected in 1999 as a Medical Adviser to the Commander, and Chief of the Medical Branch of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Mons, Belgium, for 3 years. After returning in 2002 until the end of his active military service on 31st March, 2004, he was the Surgeon General of the Czech Armed Forces. After leaving to the military reserves, he worked for four years as the Head of the Department of Burns Medicine, Charles University, 3rd Faculty of Medicine and Teaching Hospital in Prague (Prague Burns Centre). However, from 1st April, 2008, he returned to his Alma Mater, where he worked as the head of the Department of Plastic Surgery and Burns Treatment of the Surgical Department and at the same time as the Head of the Department of Field Surgery of the Faculty of Military Health Sciences, University of Defence until 2014, resp. until 2012. At present, he works in both workplaces with a shorter working time and passes his rich experience to younger doctors and students.

Through his diligence, responsibility in the performance of tasks, and his own discipline, Assoc. Prof. Klein has managed to combine clinical and scientific medical work together with managing and organizational work in the military line. He has published about 200 articles in domestic and foreign journals; he is the author of monographs and series of chapters in monographs, teaching texts, defended final research reports, etc. He has performed more than 300 lectures in several languages; he has worked and works in committees of domestic and international medical societies. Assoc. Prof. Klein is a long-time member of editorial boards and a reviewer of several domestic and foreign journals. He has worked in the scientific councils of medical faculties, commissions of the Ministry of Health, and he is a desirable opponent of scientific works.

Last of all, we would like to point out that in his diverse, persistent high workload Brigadier General Klein has always stressed the principle that for any doctor, the patient must be his first interest. This means the "patient first" motto and everything else comes later. He has always followed this rule, and his dedicated and empathic approach to patients is characteristic for him. This way he has been influencing students also as an example for the emerging generation of young military doctors. It must be noted that in all his professional and social achievements, Leo Klein remains humble and friendly to people. The Honorary Membership of the Society of Military Physicians, Pharmacists and Veterinarians and the Commemorative Medal of the Military Medical Corps for the lifetime merits in its construction and development, awarded to Brigadier General Leo Klein by the Surgeon General of the Czech Armed Forces, Brigadier General Zoltán Bubeník, MD, were undoubtedly awarded to one of the best representatives of military medicine.

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