

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

ON THE OCCASION OF THE 70th BIRTHDAY OF BRIGADIER GENERAL (RET.) Assoc. Prof. LEO KLEIN, MD, CSc.

Brigadier General (ret.) Associate Professor Leo Klein, MD, CSc., a distinguished personality of the Czech military medical service and international authority on military medicine, will celebrate a significant jubilee on April 18th, 2022. He will celebrate his seventieth birthday in the full vigour of life and work. Seventy years of a fulfilling and creative life, significant and ordinary moments, just the way life should be.



Our dear colleague was born on April 18th, 1952, in Olomouc. After graduating from the Secondary General Education School in Prostějov, he studied at the Purkinje Military Medical Academy and the Faculty of Medicine of Charles University in Hradec Králové in 1970-1976. After graduation, he completed a year of postgraduate training at the Military Hospital in Olomouc. Subsequently, he worked as Troop Medical Officer of the Heavy Artillery Brigade in Hranice in 1977-1980. He pursued his interest in surgery, which eventually would become his life's vocation, in his continuing professional training as a surgeon in the medical battalion and later in the Department of Surgery at the Military Hospital Olomouc. He became particularly fascinated with plastic surgery and burns medicine. In 1984, he was transferred to the newly built specialised department of plastic surgery and burns medicine, having successfully auditioned for the Department of War Surgery at the Purkinje Military Medical Academy in Hradec Králové.

His active clinical, scientific research and teaching activities at the University Hospital in Hradec Králové, where he also headed the Department of Plastic Surgery and Burns, resulted in defence of his dissertation in 1994 and his habilitation in 1998. When the Czech Republic joined NATO in 1999, he reached the pinnacle of his military career by being appointed Medical Advisor of the Supreme Commander and Head of the Medical Branch of the NATO Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Belgium for three years. This position was the first for a military physician from the former Eastern Bloc. Upon returning to his homeland in 2002, he served as Surgeon General of the Czech Armed Forces until his active military service ended on March 31st, 2004. Afterwards, he pursued his clinical profession as Head of the Department of Burns Medicine of the 3rd Faculty of Medicine, Charles University and the University Hospital in Prague - Vinohrady. Finally, having returned to his Alma Mater in Hradec Králové, he was appointed Head of the Department of Field Surgery of the Faculty of Military Health Sciences, University of Defence, and Head of the Department of Plastic Surgery and Burns Treatment from April 2008 until 2014. Currently, he works part-time there.

Bubeník: On the occasion of the 70th birthday of Brigadier General (ret.) Assoc. Prof. Leo Klein, MD, CSc.

Should we wish to accurately describe his creative clinical, scientific and pedagogical activities, including leadership of professional and specialised courses, membership in professional societies, scientific and editorial boards, and other activities, we would considerably exceed the recommended limit for our salutation. Therefore, I will take the liberty of mentioning a few highlights and hope not to omit anything essential. A list of his tangible achievements would include more than 200 articles in national and international journals, one monograph as the author, 12 chapters in monographs or 7 professional textbooks as the author or co-author, more than 350 lectures given at national and international level, 3 research grants, 7 defended Final Research Reports as the author or co-author et cetera. He is a member of the Purkinje Czech Medical Society, Czech Society of Plastic Surgery, Czech Society of Burns Medicine; in their committees he held positions for several terms. He was a founding member of the Society of Military Physicians, Pharmacists and Veterinarians and Chairman of its Committee in 2003-2017; he was also a member of WADEM (World Association for Disaster and Emergency Medicine), ISBI (International Society for Burn Injuries), EBA (European Burns Association), IAHM (International Association for Humanitarian Medicine Chisholm Gunn). Recently, since 2016, he has been a member of the Secretariat General of ICM (International Committee of Military Medicine). Assoc. Prof. Klein received a few significant scientific and societal recognitions. In addition to the Honorary membership of the Society of Military Medicine (formerly Society of Military Physicians, Pharmacists and Veterinarians) the ones he values most is the Gold Commemorative Medal of Purkinje Military Medical Academy and the Bronze Commemorative Medal of Charles University, Faculty of Medicine in Hradec Králové. Thus, this is a short listing of the most important ones, and it bothers me to think that I may have missed something important.

However, remembering Dr. Leo Klein, we especially bear in mind his hard work, diligence, dedication and conscientiousness in performing all the tasks associated with the demanding profession of a military surgeon. At the same time, he has always been kind, non-confrontational, and has daily demonstrated that the work and patients would come first. I remember our Professor well from my time at Purkinje Military Medical Academy. I had the privilege of meeting him during clinical practice and as my year's tutor. His rich personal and professional life, but especially his humane approach to solving all challenges and achieving one of the highest professional career pinnacles as a military medical service officer, inspired me to write a seminar paper during my stay at the General Staff in 2009-2010. I presented our General as an example of leadership in military healthcare.

Dear General, dear Professor,

I would like to wish you good health because unfortunately, not even we - the health professionals - can subscribe to maintain that. At the same time, I wish you much energy for work and life, although fortunately, you have that in spades. I wish you happiness and a sense of well-being, which we, as your colleagues and co-workers, will gladly help you achieve. And finally, we all wish that you may continue to impart your wisdom and experiences to us for a long time to come.

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