

11TH WORKSHOP OF EAMHMS “NEW LIFE OF OLD SKELETONS AND PAPIER MACHE MODELS”, JULY 4–6 2013 IN TARTU

MAIE TOOMSALU

Institute of Anatomy, University of Tartu, Estonia

Medical Collections of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Tartu, Estonia

ABSTRACT

Membership in the European Union has given the unique collections gathered during 200 years by the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Tartu an opportunity to belong to the European Association of the Museums of History of Medical Sciences, which in its turn has enabled us to cooperate with the most influential and famous medical museums of Europe. When questions arise, it is possible to invite an expert from a cooperation partner, to visit other institutions to gain experience, and being in the role of an expert, to train the specialists of other museums. It is possible to participate in the congresses and conferences arranged by the major European museums, to examine the treasures of their collections. Thus, Tartu has been visited by experts from the Netherlands, Latvia and Lithuania. There have already been ten practical training workshops, and in 2013 the practical teaching of new methods and techniques was entrusted to the Medical Collections of the University of Tartu. The workshop was held from 4–6 July at the AHHA Science Centre, as the Medical Collections of the Faculty of Medicine are also located in the exhibition space of AHHA. In addition to experts from different institutes of the University of Tartu, the participants included museum workers from the United Kingdom, India, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Sweden, Russia, Rumania and Ukraine. At the session of theoretical papers, the participants listened to presentations from the history of the Association to chemical analysis of excavated skeletons. In practical workshops, supervised by experts from Tartu, cleaning of pathological models made of papier mache and stopping of their disintegration, cleaning of bones, either ravaged with age or just arrived from excavations, and preparation of the eye were practised. One of the financial supporters of the event was EAMHMS.

The 11th workshop under the auspices of the European Association for Museums of Medical Historical Sciences was held from 4–6 July in the old Estonian University town of Tartu. The participants were the guests of the fabulous new AHHAA Centre, a very attractive activity hall in which science in all its varieties is exhibited and experienced. The AHHAA building also houses the anatomical and pathological collections of the University of Tartu. This as a replacement for the old Anatomical Theatre on Toome Hill which had to be abandoned some two years ago.

As announced at the Berlin Conference, the main theme was "A New Life for Old Skeletons and Papier Mache Models". Apart from the Estonian organizers, representatives from the UK, India, Lithuania, Netherlands, Romania, Russia, Sweden and Ukraine were present. Unfortunately, a number of the earlier registered members had to cancel their participation due to the economic crisis or for personal reasons.

After the opening ceremony, the participants visited the renowned Botanical Garden of the University of Tartu. At the theoretical session of the meeting, papers were presented by Inger Wikström-Haugen (Director of the Medical History Museum of Gothenburg, Sweden), "About the History of the EAMHMS", collection manager John Le Grand (Groningen, the Netherlands), "*Bony Stories*" and Senior Research Fellow Jana Limbo-Simovart (Estonia, Institute of History of Tallinn University) "About the Contents Several of Chemical Elements in Archaeological Human Bones as a Source of Nutrition Research".

Then there was a practical session on cleaning and stopping the disintegration of papier mache models in which each participant had a task. The participants also learned to compile a restoration passport of the object. As a result of the workshop, 25 pathological models of the Medical Collections were described, which is of great help in their further restoration. All this was introduced by Ene Sarap of Mandragora Ltd. As a well-known expert, she had to answer numerous questions. She could also exchange experience with experts of the same field from the Netherlands.

The next practical session was about cleaning damaged and dirty or excavated human bones. Some very useful advice was given. As theoretical material, the summary "About the osteological collections in Russia in the 19th–21st centuries" by Maria P. Kuzybaeva, senior staff scientist of the museological laboratory at FSBE (SRI of history of medicine" RAMS) was introduced by Maie Toomsalu. The workshop was conducted by Maie Toomsalu, project manager

of the Medical Collections of the University of Tartu and William Mulder from Utrecht University Museum.

The third practical session was about the conservation of the eye. For this purpose, a number of frozen pig's eyes were available. For many participants, this was an extraordinary experience. The workshop was supervised by Artjom Golovko, guide of the AHHA Science Centre.

There were several occasions to exchange experiences and to get to know each other. During these discussions, proposals were made to have the next meeting in Wrocław (Poland) at the forensic museum of the university. This suggestion was accepted unanimously. The ideal theme for the next meeting would be "DNA techniques in historical anatomical materials". The undersigned will try to propagate this further in cooperation with Prof. Dr. Tadeusz Dobosz, head of the department.

A visit to the A. Le Coq Brewery and Beer Museum was quite an experience. The workshop ended with a tour on the barge Jõmmu on the Emajõgi River, another highlight of the meeting, not only because of the very nice and warm weather but also food and drinks and traditional music. On the barge, a discussion took place between the participants; conclusions were made, and the event was drawn to a close.

The participants had arrived from far away and would have liked to spend at least one more day in the workshop gaining experience, but the duration of event was limited by financial constraints. Many participants travelled on to Tallinn to visit the exhibitions of its numerous museums. The feedback confirms that the event was a success, and as a result, cooperation is tightening between the medical museums of Europe. Articles and methodologies are exchanged; presentations are made at one another's events. The Medical Collections of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Tartu have once again shown that we are a fully qualified and reliable member of the European association.

Address for correspondence:

Maie Toomsalu

Institute of Anatomy

Medical Collections of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Tartu

Ravila 19, 51014 Tartu, Estonia

E-mail: maie.toomsalu@ut.ee