

In memoriam

Professor Biljana Božin, PhD
(1971–2022)



Professor Biljana Božin passed away suddenly after a short illness on 18 July 2022, at the peak of her career as a university professor and scientist. She was born on 22 January 1971 in Senta and spent her childhood in the village Padej in the North Banat district, where she is buried. After finishing elementary school in Padej, she attended high school in Kikinda and later continued her education at the high school of medicine in Novi Sad, a group for laboratory technicians. Curiosity and versatility, which were among the most outstanding characteristics of her personality, made the nineteen-year-old ask herself “*Where to next?*”. Between medicine, biochemistry and biology, she decided to study biology and in 1990 became the 30th generation of students at the Institute of Biology, Faculty of Sciences University of Novi Sad. Even during her studies, she was recognised as a biology student with exceptional knowledge and interest in various scientific fields: botany, microbiology and chemistry. She graduated in 1996 in the microbiology group, as the 952nd student since the establishment of biology studies in Novi Sad. The following year she enrolled for postgraduate studies in the Magisters programme in Biological Sciences, Microbiology Group. She defended her Magisters thesis entitled *Antimicrobial and Antioxidant Activity of Essential Oils from Species of the Lamiaceae Family* on 30 January 2004 as the 132nd Magister of Biological Sciences at the University of Novi Sad. On 27 March 2009, she defended her dissertation entitled *Biochemical and Pharmacological Studies on the Species of the Genus Allium L. (Sect. Allium)* in the field of Biochemistry, thus earning the title Doctor of Biochemical Sciences. Her education and desire to explore the natural resources of plants for the needs of pharmacy were thus rounded off.

In the academic year 2001/2002 she worked as a teaching assistant in the course Anatomy and Morphology of Plants at the Department of Biology and Ecology, Faculty of Science. Since 2002 she has been employed at the Department of Pharmacy, Faculty of Medicine, University of Novi Sad, first as a teaching assistant, then as an assistant for the subjects Pharmacognosy and Phytotherapy. In 2009, she was appointed assistant professor for the same subject group, associate professor in 2014 and full professor in 2019. At the

Faculty of Medicine she held many important positions: head of the Department of Pharmacy (2009-2015), head of the Department of Pharmacy (2015-2022), member of the Scientific Council (2015-2022), member of the Faculty Council (2012-2018), director of the Centre for Research in Medicine and Pharmacy CEMFIK (2016-2022) and many others. Professor Božin is one of the first members of the pharmacy study group at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Novi Sad.

Professor Božin imparted knowledge from six subjects in the field of pharmacognosy at different academic levels to students at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Novi Sad. She participated in teaching in the PhD programme at the Faculty of Sciences, University of Novi Sad, and was teacher of three subjects in the Pharmacy programme at the University of Split - School of Medicine (Croatia). During her academic career she supervised more than 30 master's theses, was the supervisor of two and co-supervisor of one doctoral thesis. She actively participated in organising and conducting field excursions for pharmacy students as part of botany classes. She will be remembered as an excellent lecturer and strict examiner, a passionate and honourable professor, an outstanding and ambitious mentor and, above all, a sincere friend to her students.

She began her scientific career as a postgraduate student at the Faculty of Sciences in Novi Sad. Ambitious and courageous, she boldly entered new fields of research, experimented with new methods and approaches to study bioactive molecules from plants and she was very successful, from the very beginning. She was author and co-author of more than 120 scientific papers, of which more than 80 are listed on SCI. The total number of citations exceeds 3,500 and the scientific paper titled *Characterization of the volatile composition of essential oils of some lamiaceae spices and the antimicrobial and antioxidant activities of the entire oils*, published in the Journal Agricultural and Food Chemistry, has been cited more than 580 times. The total h-index is 25. The professor has been involved in many international, national and regional projects, co-author of several peer-reviewed patents, reviewer for more than 15 journals and member of the editorial board of three journals, including *Biologia Serbica*. She has co-authored university textbooks, well-known

scientific monographs and an exceptionally large number of texts aimed at both professionals and the general public. She has been involved in the organisation of 12 scientific meetings, was a member of prestigious international scientific associations and one of the founders of the Botanical Society "Andreas Volni".

Her versatility and scientific work at no time diminished her great sacrifice and devotion to her family and friends. She was and remains a caring daughter, beloved aunt and sister, loyal friend, stern critic, faithful companion and above all: a great human being. Her sudden illness and untimely death have left all who knew her speechless. Open chapters, unfinished sentences, unrealised ideas, aban-

doned experiments were left behind. In a moment the world stopped and we looked ahead with the question, how now without Biljana? She believed in her life that ended in a single moment. She lived a life that suddenly disappeared from her. She left behind results of which her colleagues are proud and which are the basis for the learning of young generations. She left behind a body of work that is the foundation for the development of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Novi Sad. And finally, she left behind an honourable name that will serve as a source of pride for her family, friends and contemporaries, and as a tribute to those who stand in her way to continue on the path that Professor Božin prepared and determined for them.

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