

Professor MVDr Zdeněk Matyáš - 75th anniversary

Remembering the anniversary of Professor Z. Matyáš, the editorial board wishes to introduce you one of the eminent Czech workers who from the aspect of WHO left an everlasting memory in the history of microbiology and epidemiology by further development and definite anchoring of the discipline of Veterinary Public Health (VPH) in the activities of WHO. He elaborated the generally accepted strategy of this public health discipline, fixed its position in collaborating centres of WHO and in very valuable publications of WHO on zoonoses and hygienic aspects of their ecology. All this work was accomplished with the support of many expert collaborators of all WHO member countries. He was able to persuade other disciplines of biomedical sciences at the WHO headquarters in Geneva and all regional WHO offices, that the new strategy and programme of VPH is fully consistent with the defined targets in the WHO document "Health for All by the Year 2000!" Generally accepted, he completed thus the working programme of VPH for public health, started by his predecessors who headed this WHO unit, Dr. Kaplan and Prof. Abdussalam.

It must not be overlooked that the worldwide activities in different regions of WHO were based on the tradition of food hygiene and technology of foods of animal origin as pursued for years at the School of Veterinary Medicine (VŠV) in Brno. After his return from Geneva he further developed the mentioned disciplines as head of the Institute of Hygiene and Food Technology of VŠV in Brno. Within the framework of the present Institute of Public Health the Ministry of Health of the Czech Republic supported his proposal to build a centre of food chains which previously was lacking in the system of public health departments. He built the Centre, which is on the grounds of VŠV in Brno, as regards equipment and staff and elaborated for it a working programme and adequate perspective within the framework of the NIPH.

Z. Matyáš was born on December 14, 1923 in Brno and between 1945 and 1949 he was a student of the VŠV in Brno. He obtained his doctor's degree in veterinary medicine in 1950 and selected food hygiene and technology as his speciality. He became assistant professor in 1960 and in 1967 he was nominated professor and in 1977 full professor of food hygiene and technology. In 1966 he submitted his PhD. thesis. In 1948 he started to work as a voluntary worker under the guidance of Prof. MVDr. Hökl in the Institute of Food Hygiene and Technology of VŠV where he was engaged in teaching. After his return from Geneva he became head of this department. In 1974 he founded the department of food hygiene in the Research Institute of Veterinary Medicine in Brno. He acted as its external head till 1977. In Brno he established the Centre of Food Chains (1984) and headed this Centre before he retired in 1991.

During his activities at VŠV he was concerned in particular with microbiological aspects of hygiene of foods of animal origin and their wholesomeness. His basic work in the field of food hygiene and control of zoonoses caused by foods (food-born disease) and studies on the role of veterinary surgeons in public health were well known among specialists abroad. This was the reason why in 1966 he was selected in a competition for a food hygienist in WHO headquarters in Geneva. He began his work in the department of Veterinary Public Health (VPH) under the guidance of dr. Kaplan and later prof. Abdussalam

(1966-1971). In 1977 he was again asked to join VPH in Geneva as head of this unit in the Division of Infectious Diseases (1977-1983).

In WHO he was concerned with the elaboration of general and special principles of food hygiene, regulations for meat inspection, in particular in slaughterhouses, microbial specification and technology of various foods, new methods and approaches to food control, in particular from the very beginning analysis and investigations of critical control points in food production and processing (HACCP) and new principles of sample collection, examination and interpretation of results. This work resulted in the publication of pertinent documents included in the Codex alimentarius. He cooperated very closely with the International commission for microbiological specification of foods (ICMSF) and was the co-author of some monographs published by this organization highly esteemed worldwide. He continued cooperation of WHO with FAO, Rome, OIE Paris and also with the World Association of Veterinary Food Hygienists.

He elaborated detailed documents for the surveillance of food-borne diseases which became the basis for the surveillance programme in Europe and other WHO regions. This system is by now fully developed and part of it is also an alarm system which makes it possible to record rapidly and eliminate from the circulation products with serious hygienic shortcomings from international trade. This programme is controlled by the Collaborating FAO/WHO centre for research and education in food hygiene and zoonoses in Berlin.

He focused his activities also on the development of national programmes in food hygiene, in particular for developing countries, and the control of zoonoses on the basis of primary health care (PHC) principles. Equally valuable are his recommendations for planning, organization and control of national programmes of veterinary care focused on creation and protection of human health, incl. the importance of interdisciplinary and interprofessional collaboration of medical doctors and veterinary surgeons and international coordination of national programmes. There are also recommendations for teaching and training of students of veterinary medicine from the aspect of health protection.

He was concerned with the elaboration and preparation of general and special principles for surveillance, prevention and control of zoonoses, alimentary infections and intoxication - in particular salmonellosis, brucellosis, leptospirosis, mycotic zoonoses, taeniarhynchosis and others. As to generally valid principles, reports of WHO experts on bacterial and viral zoonoses, parasitic zoonoses are of major importance. Most of them were published in the Techn. Rep. Ser. WHO Geneva. The same holds for WHO documents on mycotic zoonoses, on disinfection, insect control and deratization in the food industry, on chemical residues, on the safe collection and processing of animal residues incl. cadavers in cities. The results of the mentioned work were incorporated in important publications known in all member countries under the heading of "Guidelines".

He participated also in the planning and establishment of the WHO Centre for the control of zoonoses in the Mediterranean region in Athens which developed so far specific strategies and approaches to the surveillance and control of zoonoses important in that region and applied them in member countries of

this centre. In this work 30 countries participate – European, North African and Asian. Based on the above recommendations Prof. Matyáš developed practical programmes also in Africa, south eastern Asia and western Pacific. Even after leaving WHO Prof. Matyáš collaborates with this organization as a WHO expert in the field of zoonoses.

After his return from Geneva he proceeded in his special activities: microbiological aspects of food hygiene, problems of "zero tolerance" of pathogenic microorganisms in foods etc. He elaborated a long-term research plan, was in charge of several research tasks of the newly established Centre of food chains of NIPH in Brno. His main activity, in particular after 1991 was focused on the HACCP system (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points). He elaborated this system originally for the production of meat, milk, dairy products, for production of eggs and poultry meat etc. So far he published from this important branch of control, codified also in the new Food Act of the Czech Republic, more than 40 papers. He supported also wide publicity of this control method.

Taking into account Prof. Matyáš' professional and organizational experience in the field of food hygiene and technology, it is not surprising that he is a highly esteemed member of scientific councils, commissions and advisory bodies of universities, research institutes and organs of the state administration. Among several tens of memberships in the past and present let us mention only the National Institute of Public Health in Prague, the Veterinary and Pharmaceutical University in Brno, membership in the Commission for the Codex alimentarius, committee membership in the Council of veterinary hygienists of the State Veterinary Administration.

Professor Matyáš is the author of more than 400 publications incl. original scientific papers, textbooks as well as documents and published reports of WHO which were the outcome of his activities in WHO. A still highly appreciated publication in veterinary and food practice is the monograph by Z. Matyáš et al.: *Hygiena potravin I. Maso a masné výrobky* (Food Hygiene I. Meat and Meat Products) (SZN, Prague 1965). The most topical contemporary problems are included in "General Food Hygiene I–III (VŠV and SVS, Brno, 1991). On problems of

HACCP he published a fundamental work: Z. Matyáš: "HACCP – hazard analysis critical control points" (NIPH, ČHPŘ, Prague, 1993).

As appreciation of his distinguished work and merits in the development of health services prof. Matyáš was awarded many honours, medals and distinctions at home and abroad. For his working results and participation in the development of international collaboration he was awarded in 1983 the distinction "For outstanding work", a golden medal of the Czechoslovak Agricultural Academy, he was awarded two gold medals of VŠV in Brno and almost all its medals and medals of VŠV Košice, state veterinary administrations of the Czech and Slovak Republic and other Czech and Slovak institutions and societies.

He is the only citizen of the Czech Republic who became "The 1992 Recipient of the American Veterinary Society's Honorary Diploma". Prof. Matyáš obtained for his merits in the regional development of VPH in different countries several distinctions and honorary medals from French, Portuguese, German, Polish, American and other veterinary societies. He is also holder of a special medal issued at the occasion of the 900th anniversary of the foundation of Bologna University.

Professor Matyáš devoted his professional life to the protection of man from food-borne diseases and to ensuring a healthy and wholesome diet of biologically valuable food. His scientific research, teaching, counselling and political activities contributed substantially to the development of food hygiene and health-promoting technology not only in this country, but, due to his activity in WHO, worldwide. Tenacity, vigour, extensive knowledge and experience assembled at home and abroad, exceptional teaching abilities and friendly relations with his co-workers are qualities which enable Prof. Matyáš to accomplish pretentious tasks at home and abroad.

Members of the editorial board extend their sincere wishes to Professor Matyáš and wish him much success in his meritorious work in the field of food hygiene and zoonoses.

B. Rosický and Editorial Board