

# JERUSALEM



## of Lithuania

### OPENING

The conference was opened by its chair, Maša Grodnikienė, assistant to the LJC chairman. She informed the audience that the event was organised by the LJC and the Lithuanian Tzemach Shabad Jewish Medical Personnel Association and executive committee. Conference partners and sponsors - JDC (JOINT), LJC, and the State Vilna Gaon Jewish Museum (VZM).

Participants honoured the memory of the Jewish medical personnel killed during the Second World War, in pogroms, mass exterminations, Nazi established ghettos and concentration camps, in the struggle against German fascism, during the time of Stalinist repressions, and those who died after the war, with a minute of silence.

Greetings to the conference participants arrived from Lithuanian ambassador to the Russian Federation, A.Vinkus, and from director general of "SICOR Biotech", prof. V.A.Bumel.



S. Alperavičius.

LJC chairman S. Alperavičius gave the introductory address. He said that by the second half of the 19th century, distinguished Jewish physicians in Vilnius and province, ignorance regarding hygiene on the part of the Jewish population, insufficient interest on the part of the government regarding medical aid for the population, insufficient prophylactic care regarding epidemics, and a high illness and child mortality rate. At the beginning of the 20th century, there was a great increase in the role of Jewish physicians in the public life of medical personnel in Vilnius and environs, but they had a hard time getting work and upgrading their qualifications. In 1908, doctor J.Vygodski, and physicians G.Volfson and A.Shildkret were instrumental in forming the "Doctors' Circle". Its most important goals included to unite professional, scientific, and public interests; to study the members' professional, living, and work conditions, and to defend their social and economic interests; to study the life of the Vilnius population from a medical and sanitation aspect; to organise the means to improve living and health conditions for the Jews. The organisation's statutes included the means to form a court of honour, to organise conferences, pension funds, a mutual aid fund, upgrading courses, out-patient clinics and hospitals, etc. J.Vygodski was elected chair of the organisation.

At their regularly held Doctors' Circle meetings, members shared professional experiences, gave scholarly presentations, presented their patients. They amassed and constantly supplemented a library of scientific publications. A special commission, chaired by

centre, and at T.Shabad public organisations carried on the traditions of Jewish medical workers.

Chaim Burstein, chief rabbi of Lithuania and Vilnius, reminded the conference participants of the traditional ethical principles of the physician-patient relationship.

doctor A.Virshubski, implemented a questionnaire to study the health condition of the Jews.

The Doctors' Circle temporarily suspended its activities during the First World War because most of its members were conscripted into the Russian army.

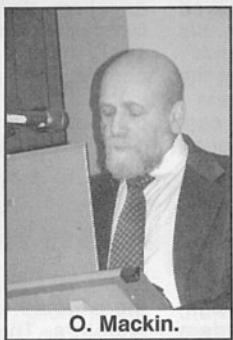
In December 1918, A.Virshubski called a council at which

## 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST JEWISH PHYSICIANS ASSOCIATION

The first public organisation uniting Jews on the principle of professional commonality - a union of Jewish physicians - was registered with the Vilnius magistrate on November 21, 1910. On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of this event, a scientific conference of medical personnel was organised at the Yascha Heifetz Hall at the Lithuanian Jewish Community (LJC) on November 14, 2010. Invited guests included LJC members, medical personnel, members of the Lithuanian Polish Medical Personnel Association and the Lithuanian Physicians Union, head physicians at the Vilnius University clinics, representatives from the Ministry of Health Care, education workers, and researchers of the history of medicine in Lithuania. Over sixty participants joined in the work of the conference. A specially erected screen was used to display the themes of the conference and of the seven most important presentations, and to demonstrate presentation illustrations.

### FROM A CIRCLE TO A UNION OF JEWISH PHYSICIANS

Therapeutic physician Osip Mackin dedicated his presentation to the Vilnius and Vilnius territory Union of Jewish Physicians. The formation of a Union of Jewish Physicians was motivated by



O. Mackin.

that it was accessible to as many Jewish people as possible, and that it included personnel who could speak the patients' mother tongue - Yiddish.

In order to help members find work according to their profession, the Union established an "employment bureau". An out-patient clinic with sixty diverse specialists was set up in 1926. For six years, the clinic was a centre of applied medical aid for the Jews. The Union actively fought against periodic attempts by the Vilnius magistrate to close the Jewish hospital. A commission made up of G.Gershun, A.Globus, G.Ko-varski, together with the Community and other Jewish organisations, succeeded in safeguarding the hospital, and did not allow the city authorities to burden the Community with the expense of maintaining it.

The Union of Jewish Physicians protested against anti-Semitic manifestations by Polish medical personnel and academics, who wanted to introduce a quota for Jews accepted into higher medical schools. In 1931, the Union, together with other organisations, defended Jewish students-medical personnel against anti-Semitic attacks, and in 1933, when the Nazis came into power, they urged that goods and medical literature brought from fascist Germany be boycotted. J.Vygodski headed the joint boycott committee. In 1937, amidst lingering general anti-Semitic feelings, the question arose whether only Christians should be members of the Polish union of physicians. The Vilnius Union of Jewish Physicians sent an appeal to all physicians, condemning the "Aryan" essence of

the work of the Doctors' Circle was renewed. At the suggestion of doctor G.Gershun, in April 1920 the Doctors' Circle was registered as the Union of Jewish Physicians. It had sixty-four members. An insurance covered hospital was established in 1922, and the Union members ensured

in small towns and villages. In his presentation, K.Shapiro emphasised that a Jewish physician has to be a therapist and a public figure, and work in the sphere of social medicine. The first double edition of the Union's "Medicinishe shrift" (Medical Notes), came out in 1939. The Union of Jewish Physicians, along with all other Jewish organisations, was liquidated by the Soviet authorities in 1940.

"The life and work of Jewish physicians was an integral part of the multi-faceted life of pre-war Vilno, which was deservedly known as Jerusalem of Lithuania," - said O.Mackinas.

### TREATMENT FACILITIES IN JERUSALEM OF LITHUANIA

Rosa Bieliauskienė gave a presentation on the history of the medical institutions in Jerusalem of Lithuania. Her information suggested that the first Jewish hospital in Vilnius, built with voluntarily donated funds, appeared on Jatkova (now Mėsinų) Street at the beginning of the 18th century. Along with



R. Bieliauskienė.

pensive treatment, the hospital was also involved in charitable works. Patients were given medications, and there was help for orphans and old people. The hospital thus acquired the name "Der Chekdesh" (shelter). Its everyday life was carried out according to Jewish traditions: food conformed to kosher rules, Jewish feast days were celebrated, and the customary language was Yiddish.

Christians also used the hospital, which was moved to Shpitalna (now Ligoninė) Street at the end of the 18th century. During its first years of activity, it belonged to the Jewish Community, but its impoverished state led the Community to appeal to Russian Emperor Alexander I for material help. The hospital was given

ven a one-time subsidy of 3,000 rubles, and additional annual funds for its maintenance. In 1842 the hospital came under the authority of the government, and in 1858 of the city. At the end of the 19th century, the Jewish hospital was one of the largest in the city, with 12 doctors, and room for 1,500 patients.

At various times, the hospital was headed by L.Samelson, L.Gershun, V.Zalkind, A.Virshubski, E.Sedlis.

The "Mishmeres Choilim" welfare association for impoverished Jewish patients was established in 1889. The association received funds for its charitable work from member fees, private donations, and religious organisations. "Mishmeres Choilim" opened an out-patient clinic, and in 1913 erected a building in which it set up a hospital and pharmacy (now a hospital), on Kauno St. Medical treatment was provided here free of charge. The clinic and hospital had bureaus and departments for the most serious medical conditions. In 1935, the "Mishmeres Choilim" association was given charge of the maternity and pediatric hospital in the Žvėrynas district in Vilnius. Half of all of the Jewish physicians in Vilnius, including L.Stembo, D.Rozenkrantz, Z.V.Perelman, worked at the association's medical institutions, which were immensely popular.

Vilnius also had quite a number of private medical institutions, including out-patient and in-patient clinics established by Ch.Zartzin, I.Bloch's maternity and gynaecological hospital, and others.

### JEWISH HEALTH CARE ASSOCIATION

Director of the LJC T.Shabad social centre, Simas Levinas, talked about the Vilnius branch of the Jewish Health Care Society (OZE).

The Society committee selected Dr. T.Shabad as its head, and known social medicine activist dr. I.Rafes as executive secretary.

At that time infectious diseases were rampant in Vilnius, with people starving, and unable to find housing. It was especially difficult for refugees who had returned after being deported from Lithuania by the czarist authorities at the beginning of the First World War.

OZE first set up a children's out-patient clinic in Vilnius, initially headed by Dr. A.Makover, later by A.Liba. The clinic had five doctors' offices, an X-ray facility, and a pharmacy. An average of 150 children came to the clinic daily for medical help. After five years, child mortality decreased 7.5 times.

In 1919 OZE acquired a school hygiene department, headed by Dr. G.Kovarski, which laid the foundation for medical treatment in schools. Fifteen doctors looked after the health of 7,000 pupils in all schools and educational institutions.

(Continued on p.7)



Conference participants.





# 100 METŲ PIRMAJAI PASAULYJE GYDYTOJŲ ŽYDŲ SAJUNGAI

(Continued from p.1)

A mother and child consultation service in conjunction with a milk kitchen, called "Tipat chalav" (Drop of milk), was set up in 1920. In November of that same year, a shelter for orphans was established on Šopeno St.

An adult out-patient clinic, opened in May 1921, served 1,500 patients every year.

In subsequent years, OZE expanded its activities to other towns and villages in Vilnius province, financed children's health camps, playgrounds, supplementary food for children from impoverished families, and the construction and maintenance of a tuberculosis hospital.

In 1923 the Vilnius OZE joined a similar Polish association, TOZ. The "Folks gezunt" newspaper came out that same year, and later became popular in many countries of the Jewish diaspora. During its years of existence, the paper came out in 300 numbers, and had a total circulation of 0.5 million copies.

The opening by the association of the very first Yiddish language nursing school was an unprecedented event worldwide. The association also held two congresses in Vilnius, in 1928 and 1933.

At the end of the 1930s, the OZE-TOZ board was made up of doctors D.Jedvabnik (chair), R.Shabad-Gavronska, R.Shadovskis, G.Matz, and others.

According to S.Levinas, the OZE-TOZ association has not lost its relevance, including in terms of today's prophylactic and social medicine.

## VILNA GHETTO MEDICAL PERSONNEL

Dr. David Shchiupakas spoke about the heroic efforts of the Vilnius medical personnel in sustaining the health of the ghetto prisoners.

According to a census of prisoners in the Vilna Ghetto, published by the VZM, the great majority of inter-war Vilnius medical personnel - 120 doctors and 33 dentists - ended up in the ghetto.

In order to curtail the spread of infectious diseases, in the very first days of the ghetto the Judenrat established a department of health care, headed by R.Shadovskis.

The ghetto prisoners lived in unbearably crowded conditions and without the most basic of amenities. They were starving and constantly in fear for the lives of their children, and tormented by physical and psychological exhaustion and illness - unavoidable consequences of constant humiliation and oppression. The children contracted illnesses related to insufficient nourishment. In order to implement the tasks of prophylactic medicine, it was necessary to create a comprehensively considered system of measures, under horrifying ghetto conditions.

The Jewish "Der Chekdesh" hospital ended up inside the ghetto territory. It had departments of urology, gynaecology, internal and children's illnesses, a surgery, eye clinic, X-ray cabinets, clinical laboratory, and pharmacy. The experienced physician and talented organiser E.Sedlis was head of the hospital, which had 152 staff people, including 26 doctors. Over 3,200 patients were treated there in 1942. Difficult operations were performed. Twenty-five doctors tended to patients at the out-patient clinic, headed by the known physician



D.Shchiupakas.

K.Shapiro. The doctors made home visits and provided medical help at any time of the day or night, which was especially needed during the Nazi "aktions".

Urgent medical care was needed for the children. Under the efforts of Dr. R.Shabad-Levande, a children's consultation service, nursery, kindergarten, orphanage, milk kitchen, and school medical centre, serviced by six paediatric doctors, were set up in the very first days of the ghetto. The school medical centre took care of 3,000 pupils.

In order to avoid outbreaks of infectious diseases, the strictest of control was set up for the sanitary conditions of residential and public buildings, yards, garbage dumps, etc. A sanitary police force, and responsible individuals from among the prisoners themselves, regularly checked that the rules of hygiene were maintained. Violators were punished with monetary fines or arrest. All ghetto residents had to use the sauna; there were vaccination centres, a laundry, barbershops, and tea shops where hot water for drinking and hygienic procedures was distributed. Special brigades disinfected and cleaned the territory.

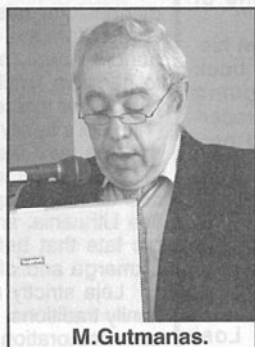
The physicians' union and the OZE-TOZ association continued to function in the Ghetto. The "Folks gezunt" newspaper was transmitted orally. The doctors spoke to the people on medical topics of concern to them, and taught good hygiene habits. Even under the most difficult of ghetto conditions, the medical personnel carried out their professional and moral obligations until the very end, when they were subject to the same fate as their patients.

## THE FIRST RADIOLOGISTS

Radiologist M.Gutman used material prepared by Dr. A.Vitėnas to give an overview of the academic and practical work of Jewish radiologists in Lithuania. According to the presentation, an X-ray machine was installed at the Jewish hospital in 1898, three years after German physicist V.Roentgen discovered the rays that were then given his name (roentgen-rays).

In 1898 L.Stembo and T.Shabad gave a presentation on the X-ray diagnosis of lung diseases, and in 1900 L.Stembo studied bone and internal organ diseases with his own installed X-ray machine. Five years later he was able to diagnose lung cancer. The first professional radiologist, L.Ivanter, worked in this sphere for forty years, and subsequently perished in the Vilna Ghetto. After the war his son Grigorij, a former Auschwitz concentration camp prisoner, also worked as a radiologist in Vilnius. Sh.Margol, a celebrated physician, and vice-chair of the Union of Jewish Physicians, carried out patient X-ray studies in inter-war Vilnius, and was the ghetto hospital radiologist. Together with his colleagues, the known scientist and radiologist Dr. M.Shneider discovered a new method of X-ray diagnosis - an electrorentgenograph - which was given a State award.

His students and colleagues had a very high regard for Dr. D.Kuntsevich, who combined scientific, practical, and pedagogical work. She was the first radiologist in Lithuania to be awarded the title Doctor of Merit.



M.Gutmanas.

Doctors F.Kovner and A.Vitėnas, who now live abroad, made an important contribution to radiology in Lithuania. They authored, and co-authored, over seventy scientific works (including several monographs).

## CONTRIBUTION TO CARDIOLOGY

Cardiologist Robertas Skalskis introduced the participants to the principal landmarks in the life and work of known Lithuanian medical personalities Prof. Ch.Kibarski and Dr. B.Efros.

After graduating in medicine from the Vytautas Magnus University, Ch.Kibarski began work in 1929 as a therapist and radiologist at the "Bikur Cholim" Jewish hospital in Kaunas. During 1936-1938 he continued to train in clinics in Prague, Vienna, and Zurich. In 1942 he was conscripted into the ranks of the 16th Lithuanian Division. After demobilisation in 1946, he worked as an assistant at the hospital therapy department of the medical faculty at Vilnius University. He spent sixty-five of his nearly one hundred years of life treating and consulting patients, and nearly half of his life teaching students. He fostered several generations of doctors in Lithuania. Ch.Kibarski was one of the first people in Lithuania to learn how to use an electrophysiological method. He discovered a new drug for treating high blood pressure, published 170 scientific articles in local and foreign publications, and co-authored several monographs. For his contribution to the science of cardiology, Ch.Kibarski (together with his colleagues) was given the Lithuanian State Award, and the title Scientist of Merit.

The celebrated heart surgeon Dr. B.Efros graduated from the medical faculty at the Vytautas Magnus University in 1939. He was licensed to perform surgical operations in 1940, and worked at medical institutions in Kaunas and Marijampolė. He was head of the surgery department at the Balkhash city hospital during 1941-1945. After the war, B.Efros was head of the surgery department at the Vilnius Railway Hospital for thirty-five years. He was one of the first surgeons in Lithuania to defend his doctorate dissertation. During his lifetime, B.Efros performed just over 12,000 general operations, but heart surgery was the apex of his surgical skills. On March 12, 1958 B.Efros performed successful heart surgery for the first time in Lithuania on a dying patient, and thereby gave him the gift of twenty-five more years of life. This operation has been included in the history of heart surgery in Lithuania. During the five subsequent years, B.Efros performed circa one hundred operations on congenital or acquired heart defects.

B.Efros spent a great deal of energy in helping to organise surgical departments in several Lithuanian cities. He was a man of great knowledge and many interests: he liked and knew music, and created educational and fiction films. He was well regarded by all who worked with, and knew him.

Dr. G.Borvein was also known for his important contribution to the science and practice of cardiology in Lithuania. He was the first to adapt an echocardiograph diagnostic machine created in Lithuania for scientific purposes. He has worked for many years as a clinic cardiologist, and is highly

regarded by his patients and colleagues.

## PUBLIC HEALTH CARE

Doctor and hygienist Ela Gurina presented a report on doctors who worked in the social medical sphere and made important contributions to Lithuania's public health care services. The first scientist in this area was V.Zalkind, from the town of Zagarė. His work was dedicated to the study of the sanitation and hygiene conditions of Vilnius, and to data on medical care for the Vilnius population. V.Zalkind published the results of his studies in a doctorate dissertation entitled "Experiences in the medical-topographical review of the city of Vilnius", which he defended in 1891.

The people who founded, and worked at the Vilnius OZE-TOZ association and Kaunas OZE association played an important role in the area of health care for the Jews of Lithuania in the first half of the 20th century.

L.Epstein was the innovator of medical care in schools in Lithuania. He set up a public health care centre for pupils in Kaunas in 1925. In the spring of 1941, as chief sanitation inspector for Lithuania, L.Epstein was in charge of operations to liquidate a typhoid epidemic, spread by water, in Vilnius.

Doctors S.Silman, R.Izrailit, J.Shtarkas, and D.Krasilshchikov carried on fruitful studies into problems related to the provision of water. The speaker shared her personal experiences of working with the well known epidemiologist K.Luxemburg, an exceptionally industrious and diligent researcher.

The presentation also focused on the sanitation and epidemiology council in Lithuania. For example, before the war, L.Kogan, minister for health care with the People's government in 1940, published a fair number of scientific articles on the question of tuberculosis epidemiology and prophylactics.

Ch.Teper, who was born in Kėdainiai, served as a physician with the 16th Lithuanian Division, and worked for many years as head of the sanitation and epidemiology board of the republic's Ministry of Health Care. Also working there was the highly experienced epidemiologist T.Podsedlovski.

M.Sheinberg, a talented organiser and scientist, physician in a battalion of the 16th Lithuanian Division, took part in the civil war in Spain. He was head and chief physician at the Vilnius Infant Home for twelve years, head of the virology laboratory at the Epidemiology, Microbiology and Hygiene Scientific Research Institute of the Lithuanian Ministry of Health Care, and engaged in scientific work in the sphere of infectious intestinal and viral epidemiology.

Another distinguished health care organiser, prof. V.Micelmacher from Šiauliai, was dismissed from his position as assistant to the minister of health care during the years of the "rootless cosmopolitan" campaign. He taught the history of medicine and foundations of health care organisation for many years at the Vilnius University medical faculty.

versity medical faculty.

E.Gurina spoke very warmly about doctor L.Potashinski, who was head of the Vilnius centre for sanitation and epidemiology for forty years. He was an energetic leader, and had formed a dedicated and large collective of colleagues.

The presentations were animated with photographs of the doctors, and with graphs and photographs of the activities of the various medical institutions. They were all welcomed with great attention and interest.

Towards the end of the conference, moderator M.Grodnikienė gave a brief review of the Lithuanian Jewish public organisations that had been established under the auspices of the Lithuanian Cultural Fund headed by the distinguished scientist and public figure, Dr. Česlovas Kudaba. She reminded the conference participants that on September 19, 1993, a founding meeting of sixty Jewish medical personnel decided to set up an association of Lithuanian Jewish medical personnel, with elected chair Ch.Kibarski, first assistant B.Efros, and assistants A.Vitėnas and D.Shchiupakas.

The "Ezra" medical consultation centre was founded in 1993, with Dr. Michail Zak at its head. The Jewish women's organisation WIZO began its work at the same time. Under the leadership of Rachele Kostanian, and the active participation of C.Erenburg and other women, a list was compiled of mostly old and single Jewish people who required medical and social assistance. Lists were also compiled by other organisations that came into existence at that time: the Union of Former Ghetto and Concentration Camp Prisoners, and the Union of Second World War Veterans. A great deal was accomplished in providing support not only to members

of the Jewish community in Vilnius, but in the regions as well. A great deal of material support for the medical consultation centre came from Avrom Glikman in Great Britain. "Ezra", now under the leadership of doctor Ninela Efros, has been functioning in the LJC building since 1994. At various times, consultation to patients has been provided by professors Ch.Kibarski and A.Matulis, doctors M.Zak, V.Barsukaitė, G.Borveinas, A.Vitėnas, B.Efros, I.Vagman, I.Vainrub, S.Gandelsonienė, Žioprys, L.Zimaniene, Lurje, M.Moskvina, M.Ostapenko, J.Skiliutauskas, Temkina, A.Tolzer, I.Cherkaski, L.Sherling, J.Shchiupakas, S.Efron, pharmacists M.Braverman, A.Dimenstein, and Kapliauskienė, and nurse Olshvang. J.Gurvich and L.Jacovskaja, long-time assistants at "Ezra", were highly respected by patients and doctors alike.

M.Grodnikienė thanked the organising committee for the possibility to hold the conference, and J.Zhiburkus for his participation in supporting the conference programme.

In his closing words, S.Alperavičius emphasised the importance of the conference materials, and proposed that they be published as a separate collection.

Dr. David SHCHIUPAKAS, Osip MACKIN



M.Grodnikienė.



R.Skalskis.