

# Important Milestones in Slovak Pharmacy



## Slovakia joined PGEU in 1997

Slovak pharmacy has a centuries-old tradition. The first pharmacy in Bratislava has been established in 1310, in Košice in 1394 and in Bardejov in 1442. The first fellowships of pharmacists in our country were established in the latter half of the 19th century and in 1927 "Sväz lekárnikov Slovákov" (Slovak Pharmacists Association) emerged. This association fulfilled after long decades the dream of several generations of pharmacists when in 1943 our first community organisation – "Lekárnická komora" (Chamber of Pharmacists) – was established. Unfortunately, in 1950 the totalitarian regime in its early days abolished this chamber as well as other Professional chambers. During forty years of communism it was impossible to think about recovery of the community organisation as mere reference to its existence could lead to persecution.



After the Velvet revolution in 1989 the opportunity presented for the formulation and enforcing our goals and priorities in the Slovak pharmacy in a way that would reflect changed social relationships dawned. Spontaneously, " Fórum lekárnikov Slovenska" (Forum of Pharmacists of Slovakia) was established. Despite the difficulties resulted from the long-term interruption of traditions and loss of inter-generational continuity in the community philosophy, in 1991 the Forum enforced the establishment of "Slovenská lekárnická komora" (Slovak Chamber of Pharmacists) by the Parliament with compulsory membership. Almost 18 years of activities have proven to the fullest extent the justification and usefulness of its existence. However, the new management of the Ministry of Health, supported by so-called neo-liberals among the government coalition, is currently trying to reverse developments in a way which has many parallels in the EU.

1997 was a year of several vital priorities for community pharmacy. One of them was the effort to advocate the legal right of pharmacists to freely practice their profession, in line with the norms in the developed European countries. Support from Slovakia as well as from abroad was needed and so our activities were oriented toward this objective. On June 2nd 1997 SLeK joined PGEU with an observer status. This evolved into ordinary membership in 2004, after Slovakia joined the EU.

Contacts on international level help us in our efforts to ensure high level of pharmacy services in Slovakia and use ideas from other European countries for our patients. The first PGEU Round Table with observer members was organised in Bratislava in 2001.

Since 2004 the struggle for the economic survival of pharmacists and enforcement of free and independent practice of the profession reached a critical point. While the role of community pharmacists' organisations in meeting the public health tasks were supported and respected in the EU countries, in our country this was not the case. From the onset of its establishment there was and still is an effort aimed at restricting the competencies of the organisation and in recent years we have witnessed a pressure to eliminate most of those competencies.



The healthcare aspect of services provided by pharmacists to the citizen is more and more subject to economic and market criteria. Medicines, in particular, are becoming 'goods' and their therapeutic value is more and more overshadowed in this approach. A suggested legislative amendment sees pharmacies as instrument of achieving the highest possible profit. All is directed towards ensuring that the strong financial groups can acquire influence over the financial flows in the healthcare sector. The independent and free conduct of pharmacist's profession has been never before endangered to a greater extent than it is now. We are standing at the crossroads again – as we have done many times before – and waiting while others take decisions about us. However, we cannot allow this situation to persist. It's time to overtake fate and place it in our hands, and never again cause the distortion of our ethical and professional principles. The principles of governance of the conduct in the pharmacy sphere are time-honoured. We cannot however expect that Europe will do this on our behalf. Quite the opposite is true. We must do it for Europe to prove that we belong to this society.



## New era of SLeK

The Slovak Chamber of Pharmacists is the legal representative of the pharmacy community. As of October 1999 SLeK members started to receive the monthly magazine "LEKÁRNICKÉ LISTY" (The Pharmacist's Letters), and a separate supplement APOTHECA within the magazine "Lekárnik" (The Pharmacist), issued by the company 1. slovenská lekárnická spoločnosť Unipharma, Prievidza, preceded it. On May 1st 2002 National Council of Slovak Republic Act No. 216/2002 Coll. on the profession of pharmacist and Slovak Chamber of Pharmacists came into effect.

At present time around 3,900 members are registered in SLeK. These include pharmacists providing pharmacy care in the community pharmacies as well as the hospital pharmacies. The Chamber conducts appraisal of professional qualification for the conduct of profession of pharmacist and holds a registry of all licensed pharmacists. Pharmacists have an obligation to take part in continuing education, organised by the Chamber. The Chamber supervises the ethical and disciplinary action of pharmacists. The Chamber organises annual events and health programs for patients as listed below. The Chamber's website is [www.slek.sk](http://www.slek.sk).



## Annual events

Day of Pharmacies – every third Tuesday in September – meetings, seminars, discussions with patients, special services in pharmacies for free, painting, sports events etc

Congress of Pharmacists – held regularly in November, international guests from pharmacist's organisations

Medicamenta Nova – in January, new molecules and achievements in the field of pharmacy

Days of Pharmacists – three-day meeting of pharmacists with latest information and social event

Regional meetings of pharmacists – based on historical division of Slovakia, pharmacists meet together for two-day event

Health programs for patients

Ask your pharmacist

Stop smoking with the help of pharmacists

Week of Heart

Know your cholesterol level

