

Remembering Jana Zvárová (1943-2017)

Jan H. van Bommel, Marion Ball, Arie Hasman



We were all shocked when hearing that Dr. Jana Zvárová had passed away on July 5th, 2017. She was one of the most active members within IMIA and EFMI and perhaps the very first person in our field from the former East-European countries.

Jana Zvárová was born in 1943 in Prague, Czechoslovakia. After graduating in Mathematics in 1965 at the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics of Charles University in Prague, she collaborated with several disciplines of Charles University (Medicine, and Mathematics and Physics). She founded the Medical Informatics section of the Czech Society of Biomedical Engineering and Medical Informatics in 1978. She was nominated in 1999 full professor at Charles University and received in the same year the highest Czech scientific degree of Doctor of Sciences at the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic.

Dr Zvárová systematically applied new theoretical knowledge in biomedicine, particularly in epidemiology and public health. Since 1994, she chaired the *European Center of Medical Informatics, Statistics, and Epidemiology* (EuroMISE) of Charles University and the Academy of Sciences. Between 2006 and 2011, she was the director of the *Center of Biomedical Informatics*. She was the representative of the Czech Republic in IMIA (the International Medical Informatics Association) and in EFMI (the European Federation for Medical Informatics). She was a member of editorial boards of several national and international journals. The results of her research are documented in 10 monographs and more than 300 articles in peer-reviewed journals.

In the framework of European projects, she started new lines of research and education concerning electronic health records, knowledge representation in clinical guidelines, decision support systems, and methods for evaluation of

knowledge. She organized several IMIA and EFMI international conferences and workshops in Prague. Dr Zvárová also initiated the foundation of the EuroMISE Mentor Association focusing on international cooperation in student mentoring activities.

Perhaps, Jana Zvárová's first visit to an international conference was in 1983, when she attended Medinfo 83 in Amsterdam, IMIA's tri-annual World Conference on Medical Informatics. Since that time, Jana organized many meetings and projects herself, in close collaboration with several colleagues from abroad. During the past years, we have learned to know many active members in IMIA and EFMI; all of them were active and energetic, but hardly any of them could be compared with Jana Zvárová, whose creativity and endeavors were far beyond those of all others.

Already in September 1985, Jana took the initiative to organize in Prague a Conference on Medical Decision Making, covering diagnostic strategies and expert systems. Jana requested François Grémy and Jan van Bommel to chair this four-day meeting in which also people from then communist countries took part. An important book from North-Holland Publishing Company was the result of this conference, the first one of that kind in the communist world.

The years before 1989 were very difficult, but already before that year Jana managed to start research projects, organize international and local meetings, and to travel abroad. But after the so-called velvet revolution, things improved radically. For instance, Jana's Center took the initiative to organize courses in Medical Informatics at a new center of the Academy of Sciences in Prague, where she had established her own research activities.

The Academy of Sciences, Charles University, and the European Union gave support to this initiative and the result was that during four years, 1996 – 1999, three-week courses in Medical Informatics were given each year for about 20-25 students, with hands-on experience. We want to stress that it was Jana who organized such projects and that they were accomplished only thanks to her perseverance.

Not only was Jana a professional of the first order, she also was a devoted wife and mother having raised very successful children and being a role model for women in the field of Health Informatics internationally. Shortly before her death she planned to publish a special issue on *Women in Health Informatics* in the *International Journal on Biomedicine and Healthcare*, to appear in the autumn of 2017, to which many of the international medical informatics female professionals were invited by her to make a contribution.

Jana's energy was amazing, even until only a few months before she passed away, when she organized once more a conference here in Prague at the House of Physicians. Of course, after so many years, several other stories could be told, but we will finish by repeating once more that everyone was deeply impressed by Jana's personality. Jana knew exactly what she wanted, but was at the same time a warm and friendly person. Together with all other colleagues in EFMI and IMIA, we were always much delighted to give support to Jana's initiatives. Personally and professionally we do miss Jana dearly. It has been indeed an honor to have been counted to her friends.