
Third Faculty of Medicine, Charles University - A Lively Faculty



Last year, the faculties of medicine at Charles University celebrated their 670th anniversary. In 1953 the Prague Faculty of Medicine was divided into three subjects, which for simplicity, are now referred to as the First, Second and Third Faculties of Medicine. Today, we will focus on the Third Faculty of Medicine, Charles University, which is part of the Vinohrady University Hospital Complex.

The Third Faculty of Medicine, Charles University (3FM CU) has, for many years, been known for its successful efforts to de-emphasize thoughtless memorization of historical medical facts in favor of developing medical critical thinking skills. This facilitates a natural professional bond between teachers and students. From the very beginning of their study, the student is encouraged to start thinking like a doctor in a doctor's office. Patients do not have "heart attack" or "broken rib" written on their forehead, but they do have vague complaints of chest pain. The 3FM CU stresses the logical thinking skills that lead from a vague complaint to a specific diagnosis.

Rapport between teachers and students at the 3FM CU is built before classes ever start. Each year, the faculty sponsors a summer camp in Dobronice for the incoming first year students. In this informal setting students with their future teachers may flip a boat and fall into the water of the Lužnice river, or they might play an important role in helping a teacher solve a diagnostic problem from his or her practice

The faculty and its origin



While the Third Faculty of Medicine, Charles University is a pioneer with regard to its teaching methods and friendly atmosphere, it has deep historical roots that date back to 1348, when the Faculty of Medicine first opened its doors in Prague as part of the newly established Charles University. As noted above, the Faculty of Medicine grew to the point that it was subdivided into three independent faculties in 1953. At that time, it was the Medical Faculty of Hygiene (LFH) in the Vinohrady University Hospital Complex (which now consists of the University Hospital Královské Vinohrady (FNKV), the State Health Institute, the State Institute for Drug Control, the Institute of Postgraduate Education in Health, and the Third Faculty of Medicine).

In 1991, the LFH was renamed the 3FM, and at the same time, the teaching approach used in the medical study program began to change. After several years, the transformation was completed, and now the faculty (the only one in the Czech Republic) teaches future doctors using a modern problem-oriented teaching approach. In practice, this means that in the first year of study, students do not learn the traditional separate subjects (i.e., anatomy, histology, physiology, biochemistry, etc.), but instead participate in a curriculum that stresses an integrated approach to learning. The first year focuses on the Cellular Basis of Medicine and the second year focuses on the Structure and Function of the Human Body. In subsequent years of study, the teaching of clinical disciplines is based on a practical approach (starting with symptoms, then moving on to diagnoses, and concluding with treatments), which is followed by the analysis of specific patient case histories (which help future doctors learn to make practical decisions).

The Third (FM) in numbers

In the 2018/2019 school year, a total of 2,173 students (including students in the foreign and doctoral programs) were studying at the Third FM CU. Students can choose from several study programs: General Medicine (also taught as

an English program), General Nursing, Public Health, Physiotherapy, Dental Hygienist; and starting in academic year 2019/2020, there will be a follow-up Master's program in Intensive Care and a Bachelor's program in Nutritional Therapy. The Faculty is affiliated with 53 clinics and institutes and has 137 professors and associate professors (December 31, 2018).

The 3FM CU clinical affiliations cover almost every field of medicine. The clinics are mainly located within the Královské Vinohrady University Hospital, although, there are clinics at Thomayer Hospital, the Central Military Hospital, Bulovka Hospital, and the National Mental Health Institute. As well as the Prague locations mentioned above, there are also several other Prague and non-Prague clinics and institutes.

Linking science to clinical practice



In addition to its unique pedagogical approach, the faculty places great emphasis on the development of scientific research and its interconnection with medical practice. Some of its most notable successes (including a number of prestigious international awards) were achieved in cardiovascular, diabetes and nutrition, cancer, neuroscience, and traumatology research. If it were not for the 3FM CU and the FNKV, modern-day patients who suffered a myocardial infarction would be restricted to bed rest for several weeks waiting for a stable scar to form in the damaged muscle tissue. Instead, as is the case today, they can resume a nearly normal life with a virtually undamaged myocardium only a few days after acute angioplasty. The current Dean has been a significant contributor to this transformation in cardiology thinking.

Naturally, the 3FM is not limited to producing excellent cardiologists. For example, the Burn Medicine Clinic has a prestigious reputation and serves more than half of the Czech Republic. The clinic is also pioneering new nanotextiles to treat burn trauma.

The Trauma Center receives a huge variety of patients from a large part of Prague, which provides new surgeons with experience after experience of unique and demanding cases. Department of Oncology, with its interdisciplinary

specialists in dermatology, gynecology, ENT, surgery, and hematology serve the whole of the Czech Republic with a wide range of modern targeted therapies. As with the Trauma Center, such a large patient base provides invaluable experience for new doctors that is hard to obtain at smaller centers.

Science and Research



At the 3FM CU, research funded by 21 domestic and 2 international grants is currently underway, and relative to the size of the faculty, it holds a prominent position in the amount of scientific research carried out. Traditionally, the most active area of the research have been cardiology, neurosciences, diabetology, and metabolism, although, basic research has seen rapid growth. The research and development staff at the 3FM consistently publishes over 20 original papers per year in journals with high impact factors. International cooperation is strongly encouraged and systematically supported at the 3FM, and we recently introduced a program to motivate the best graduates to start their scientific career at our faculty.

International Cooperation



The 3FM is integrally involved in international cooperation in the areas of teaching, research, and clinical fields. The international integration is evidenced by the awarding of honorary doctorates by the 3FM to leading experts (Prof. Dr. med. Dr. Thomas Ruzicka, FCMA; Prof. Dr. Dr. Salim Yusuf, D.Phil., FRCPC, FRSC, Prof. Dr. Dr. Volker Diehl, Prof. Dr. Philip G. Zimbardo, Ph.D., Prof. Erling Norrby, MD, Ph.D., Prof. Eugene Braunwald, MD), who have achieved outstanding results in their fields and represent world-class personalities.

Participation in the Erasmus Plus program continues to grow and is some we are very proud of, with more students (101 in 2018) from the 3FM participating than from any other medical faculty of Charles University. Projects within the Charles University Strategic Partnership (specifically with Zurich, Heidelberg, and Leuven) are being actively developed. The faculty is also involved in projects for the newly established 4EU Plus network. Finally, international students studying at the 3FM CU or coming within the framework of the IFMSA and ERASMUS Plus programs provide an international atmosphere to daily life at the Third Faculty of Medicine.

The student life



The 3FM is renowned for the richness of student life. The student-tutor project at the 3FM helps link students from the later years of study with students in the earlier years of study, with the goal of helping first-year students get off to a great start at the 3FM CU. The university also offers many organizations for students. The TriMed student association has a long tradition. They annually organize many events such as the Beánie - Baptism of freshmen, the St. Nicholas Day party, "Steamboat Troika" - a boat party, Vinohradská Charity Run or Run for those that can't, a charity project for disabled children, which is part of the annual Prague Half Marathon. Equally active is 3FM IFMSA, which supports student mobility.

When a bit of relaxation is needed, "Little Eden," a nearby and popular café, is also the meeting place of the Troika Academic Club (Troika is slang name of the 3FM). Students can find this imaginary paradise directly opposite the entrance to the main building of the 3FM and relax while sipping good coffee or the Frajer brand of beer. Should students require additional intellectual stimulation, they can also listen to one of the expert lectures or participate in one of the discussions that are organized at the café.