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**Presidents of the Serbian Medical Society as leading figures in its development (1872–2025)**

Председници Српског лекарског друштва као водеће личности његовог развоја  
(1872–2025)

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## Presidents of the Serbian Medical Society as leading figures in its development (1872–2025)

### Председници Српског лекарског друштва као водеће личности његовог развоја (1872–2025)

#### SUMMARY

Dr. Vladan Đorđević, together with fourteen other colleagues, founded the Serbian Medical Society in 1872, which has been publishing the journal *Serbian Archives of Medicine* since 1874. From its founding and the adoption of the first Constitution (June 8, 1872) to the most recent amendments and supplements to the Statute (February 6, 2025), the Society has adopted a total of 29 highest-level normative acts. In the initial period these were titled *Constitution* (1872–1884), followed by *Rules* (1905–1963), while since 1970 the term *Statute* has been used. The Statute regulates the manner of election of the President of the Society and the scope of his duties. From its founding to the present day, the Serbian Medical Society has had a total of 40 Presidents, or Presidents of the Presidency during the period from 1980 to 1991. This paper presents the rudimentary biographical data of the presidents of the Society who, through their work or by initiating statutory changes, contributed to the advancement of the Society's activities.

**Keywords:** Serbian Medical Society; founders; statutory changes; honorary Presidents

#### САЖЕТАК

Доктор Владан Ђорђевић са четрнаесторицом колега оснива 1872. године Српско лекарско друштво које од 1874. издаје часопис „Српски архив за целокупно лекарство“. Од оснивања и доношења првог Устава (8. јун 1872) до последњих измена и допуна Статута (6. фебруар 2025), Друштво је усвојило укупно 29 највиших нормативних аката који су у почетном периоду носили назив *Устав* (1872–1884), затим *Правила* (1905–1963), док се од 1970. године до данас користи назив *Статут*. Статутом је регулисан начин избора председника Друштва и делокруг његовог рада. Од оснивања до данас Српско лекарско друштво имало је укупно 40 председника, односно председника Председништва у периоду од 1980. до 1991. године. У овом раду дати су основни биографски подаци председника Друштва који су својим радом или иницирањем статутарних промена доводили до напретка у раду Друштва.

**Кључне речи:** Српско лекарско друштво; оснивачи; статутарне промене; заслужни председници

#### INTRODUCTION

From the founding of the Serbian Medical Society and the adoption of its first Constitution (June 8, 1872) to the most recent amendments and supplements to the Statute (February 6, 2025), the Society has adopted a total of 29 highest normative acts. In the initial period, these acts were entitled *Constitution* (1872–1884), followed by *Rules* (1905–1963), while since 1970 the title *Statute* has been used to denote the highest normative act.

Under the Constitution of the Serbian Medical Society of 1872, the competencies of the President of the Society were precisely defined, establishing the President as both its executive and representative authority. A constitutional provision stipulated that the President managed

the Society's overall operations, ensured the implementation of constitutional norms, signed all official documents (diplomas, records, decisions, official correspondence, and financial instruments), determined the agenda of meetings, and was authorized to convene extraordinary sessions [1].

The competencies of the President, as defined in the earliest normative acts, did not undergo substantial changes in their basic features throughout the historical development of the Society.

Given that the President's powers included proposing the program of activities and initiating amendments and supplements to the fundamental act, the President played a key role in directing the Society's activities and functioning. It may therefore be concluded that the work of the Serbian Medical Society was, to a significant extent, shaped by the actions and engagement of its President.

From its founding to the present day, the Serbian Medical Society has had a total of 40 Presidents, or Presidents of the Presidency in the period from 1980 to 1991. The duration of their terms of office and the scope of their powers was regulated by the highest valid acts of the Society.

From the founding of the Society until the adoption of the Statute in 1983, the President's term of office lasted one year. The Statute of 1983 established that the term of office of the President of the Presidency would last two years.

The Statute adopted in April 1974 was aligned with the Constitution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia adopted in February of the same year. Further changes in the organizational structure and management of the Society, as well as a more explicit alignment with the doctrine of self-managing socialist governance and the prevailing ideological and political orientation of the time, were incorporated into the Statute of 1980. This act established the Presidency of the Assembly as the executive governing body, replacing the former

Executive Board, and transferred the authority to elect the President of the Society from the Assembly to the Presidency. (This provision was also retained in the statutes of the Serbian Medical Society adopted during the period of transition and the abandonment of the ideology of socialist self-management.) At the same time, the title of the office was changed, replacing the designation President of the Society with President of the Presidency of the Society. The Statute of 1983 extended the term of office of the President of the Presidency from one to two years. The Statute adopted in 1991 reinstated the title President of the Society and extended the term of office to four years. The Statute of 2010 allowed one consecutive re-election to the office of President, while the Statute of 2018 abolished the limitation on the number of terms for which officials of the Society may be elected [2].

## **PRESIDENTS OF THE SERBIAN MEDICAL SOCIETY**

Owing to the efforts of Dr. Vladan Đorđević, the Serbian Medical Society was founded in 1872. At the so-called “First Preliminary Meeting,” held on May 4, 1872, the following physicians were present: Carlo Belloni, Jovan Valenta, Joachim Medowicz (Aćim Medović), Petar Ostojić, Josif Holec, Sava Petrović, Đorđe Klinkovski, Jan Mašín (Jovan Mašin), Panayotis Papakostopoulos, Bernhard Brüll, Julius Lenk, Marko Polak, and Vladan Đorđević, as well as the dentist Ilija Ranimir. At this meeting, a provisional governing board of the Society was elected: Dr. Aćim Medović was chosen as provisional president, Dr. Jovan Mašin as vice-president, and Dr. Vladan Đorđević as secretary [3].

Of the fourteen Belgrade physicians who participated in founding the Society, four later also served as presidents of the Serbian Medical Society: Aćim Medović, Panayotis Papakostopoulos, Đorđe Klinkovski, and Vladan Đorđević.

The first president of the Serbian Medical Society was **Dr. Aćim Medović** (1815–1893) (Figure 1). He served as president from May 4, 1872 to April 26, 1873.

Dr. Aćim Medović was the first advocate of establishing a medical society in the Principality of Serbia. In an article published in *Srbske novine*, he expressed hope and expectation that the sanitary administration would “find the means to unite all physicians in our country into a single medical society,” which would keep medical annals and systematically collect and preserve experience gained from individual clinical cases, forensic-medical issues, and monitoring of the population’s health status, so that the observations of individual physicians might become useful to the entire medical corps and be preserved “from oblivion” for the benefit of science [4, 5].

Dr. Medović’s mandate as president of the Society ended with his resignation, which resulted from a personal conflict with the vice-president, Dr. Jovan Mašin.

In addition to his significant role in the founding and early development of the Serbian Medical Society, Dr. Aćim Medović was a corresponding member of the Society of Serbian Letters, a full member of the Serbian Learned Society, and an honorary member of the Serbian Royal Academy, thereby institutionally affirming his contribution to Serbian science and culture [6, 7].

After Vice-President Dr. Jovan Mašin withdrew from the Serbian Medical Society, the chairmanship was assumed by the oldest member of the Society, **Dr. Panayotis Papakostopoulos** (1820–1879). Dr. Papakostopoulos served as president until the annual assembly held on November 4, 1873. In addition to his medical profession, Dr. Papakostopoulos was also a professor of Greek at the Belgrade High School. He belonged to a circle of members of the Serbian Medical Society who, in addition to professional work, made a significant contribution to the development of Serbian culture. In the history of Serbian

literature, he is recorded as one of the early translators of works of ancient Greek literature into Serbian, including Homer's *Odyssey* [8, 9].

**Dr. Đorđe Klinkovski** (1827–1905) served as the fourth president of the Serbian Medical Society from May 6, 1886 to February 16, 1890.

The founder of the Serbian Medical Society, **Dr. Vladan Đorđević** (1844–1930) (Figure 2) was the fifth president from February 16, 1890 to October 3, 1892. Immediately after the founding of the Society, he served as secretary and subsequently became the initiator and first editor of the journal *Srpski arhiv za celokupno lekarstvo* (*Serbian Archives of Medicine*). The strength of the foundations on which Dr. Vladan Đorđević built the Serbian Medical Society is evidenced by the fact that, despite numerous historical trials, the Society preserved continuity in its work. Over more than a century and a half of existence, it survived eight wars, including the NATO bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, as well as profound changes in state systems and territorial frameworks. From 1872 to the present day, the Serbian Medical Society has operated within six different state formations, retaining its status as the most important medical organization in Serbia and, in terms of continuity of existence, one of the oldest in Europe.

Appointed by decree of Prince Milan on April 13, 1879 as head of the Sanitary Department of the Ministry of the Interior, Dr. Vladan Đorđević undertook the drafting of key legislative acts in the field of public health. The Law on the National Sanitary Fund was adopted in 1879, and the Law on the Organization of the Sanitary Profession and the Protection of Public Health in 1881, thereby laying the institutional foundations of the modern health service in Serbia.

Dr. Vladan Đorđević served as Minister of Education and Ecclesiastical Affairs, as well as acting Minister of National Economy, in the government of Nikola Hristić from April 1888 to February 1889. He held the office of Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the

Kingdom of Serbia from October 1897 to 1900.

He was a full member of the Serbian Learned Society from 1869, a full member of the Serbian Royal Academy of Sciences, and a corresponding member of several international professional associations. He was promoted to the first honorary Doctor of Medical Sciences of the University of Belgrade on September 17, 1925.

In addition to his medical and political engagement, Dr. Vladan Đorđević had been active in literary work since his secondary-school days. He wrote plays, short stories, travelogues, and novels, leaving behind a voluminous and genre-diverse opus.

Viewed in its entirety – as physician, reformer, statesman, and writer – Dr. Vladan Đorđević ranks among the most prominent figures of Serbian history from the late nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth century [10].

The First Congress of Serbian Physicians was held jointly with Serbian natural scientists in Belgrade from 18 to 20 of September 1904, as part of the celebration of the centenary of the First Serbian Uprising and the coronation of King Peter I Karađorđević, who was also the patron of the Congress. The president of the Organizing Committee was Dr. Jovan Danić, president of the Serbian Medical Society and Editor-in-Chief of the *Serbian Archives of Medicine*.

**Dr. Jovan Danić** (1854–1924) was the eighth president of the Serbian Medical Society. He served his first term from January 23, 1899 to May 7, 1905, and his second from September 26, 1907 to October 25, 1910. After the expiration of his second term, he was elected lifetime honorary president of the Society. He edited four journals, including *Serbian Archives of Medicine* (from the second issue in 1896 until 1924) and *Narodno zdravlje. Lekarske pouke narodu* (from the second issue in 1896 until 1914). In 1885, he was elected an honorary member

of the Royal Medical Academy in Rome and an honorary member of the Association of Physicians of Croatia, Slavonia, and Međimurje county.

He published more than 200 works, including books, original articles, health-education papers, translations, adapted translations, and travelogues [11].

As previously noted, over more than a century and a half of its existence, the Serbian Medical Society adopted a total of 29 highest legal acts, mostly minor amendments. A turning point was marked by the *Rules* adopted in 1905, based on a proposal submitted on behalf of five members of the Society by Dr. Mita Nikolić and Dr. Đoka Nikolić, which initiated the “second period” of the Society’s development. These *Rules* created conditions for expanding membership, improving the work of governing bodies, enhancing the material position of members, and strengthening the role of the Society in the organization and functioning of the health service. The Rules established new bodies and institutions of the Society: The Executive Board, the Court of Honor, and the Fund for Assisting Poor Physicians, Their Widows, and Orphans. The Executive Board consisted of nine members, one of whom had to be a military physician. From among its members, the Board elected the president, vice-president, and secretary [12].

**Dr. Đorđe-Đoka J. Nikolić** (1863–1940) served as president of the Serbian Medical Society in two terms: from May 7, 1905 to October 6, 1907, and from January 11, 1914 to December 5, 1919. He was an energetic advocate of establishing a Faculty of Medicine in Belgrade.

He was president of the Society during the First World War. He chaired the commemorative extraordinary session of the Society, at which he stated:

“In vain today do our eyes search among the ranks for old acquaintances – there are none, we do not see them. We shall find them among those who have repaid their debt to the fatherland. When the balance of the fallen and the survivors began to be drawn up, it became clear that the

medical profession occupied first place among the fallen” [13].

From 1921 until his retirement in 1923, he served as Assistant Minister of Health. In 1922, he was elected an honorary member of the Royal Sanitary Institute in London.

In addition to his professional work, he engaged in literary activity and translation. He translated from English and German not only medical works but also literary texts, among which Henrik Ibsen’s drama *John Gabriel Borkman* stands out [14].

Two significant amendments to the Rules of the Serbian Medical Society date from 1911 and 1919. The first was adopted at the XXXIX Annual General Assembly in 1911, when it was decided to establish subcommittees of the Society in every district town. One of the proponents of this amendment, Dr. Aleksa Stojković, called the subcommittees “the cornerstone for the future building of our organization” [15].

The second amendment was adopted at the Annual General Assembly of the Society held on November 22, 1919, on the proposal of Dr. Vojislav J. Subbotić, who, together with 23 other members, proposed enabling the establishment of professional sections. The need for their establishment was justified as a measure for the “differentiation of professional work and the deepening of studies and discussions” [16]. These amendments later enabled the development of the Society through the establishment of numerous branches and sections as forms of territorial and professional organization.

**Dr. Vojislav J. Subbotić** (1859–1923) (Figure 3) served as president of the Society from October 12, 1910 to December 29, 1913 and from November 22, 1919 to September 3, 1921. From his arrival in Belgrade in May 1889, he was very active in the work of the Society, which he regarded as crucial for the postgraduate education of Serbian physicians. In his first year at the General State Hospital, he delivered around 60 reports. He organized meetings of surgeons,

including the First Meeting of Serbian Surgeons (1907) and the First Yugoslav Meeting for Operative Medicine (1911).

Dr. Bukić Pijade described the period of his presidency as a “period of scientific momentum”.

Dr. Vojislav J. Subbotić was one of the founders of the Faculty Medicine, the first full professor of surgery, the first vice-dean, and the second dean. He was also a member of numerous prestigious foreign societies, including the French, German, and International Surgical Societies, the Pest Medical Society, the Paris Medical Academy, and the Societies of War Surgeons of the USA and England [17, 18].

Two presidents of the Serbian Medical Society from the interwar period are of particular importance for the institutional and material development of the Society: Dr. Vojislav M. Subotić Jr., founder of the largest endowment administered by the Society, and Dr. Svetislav Stefanović, during whose presidency the Society, after more than six decades as a tenant, began holding professional meetings and annual assemblies in its own building.

**Dr. Vojislav M. Subotić** (1866–1922) served as president of the Serbian Medical Society from September 3, 1921 to February 4, 1922. His public and professional engagement was primarily directed toward work in the Serbian Red Cross Society and the Serbian Medical Society. He was a member of the Red Cross administration from 1898 to 1921, initially as secretary and, from July 1914, as vice-president.

He had been active in the Serbian Medical Society since May 18, 1902 as a board member, secretary, and treasurer. He was elected president at the 43rd Annual General Assembly held on September 3, 1921 and submitted his resignation from membership and the presidential office on February 4, 1922.

During the Great War, he experienced two severe personal tragedies. First, he lost his only son

Luka, who, as a volunteer hospital orderly, contracted typhoid fever and died on December 27, 1914. On May 30, 1915, his wife Melania died “of excessive, immeasurable grief” for their son.

These events directly influenced the establishment of the “Endowment of Medical Student Luka and His Parents Melania and Dr. Vojislav Subotić,” of which Dr. Subotić informed the Ministry of Education and Ecclesiastical Affairs on June 8, 1915.

Significant real estate assets in Belgrade were transferred to the Endowment: a house in Takovska 19 and two plots of land, one near the Tobacco Factory and the other in Bulver Despota Stefana near the Pančeva Bridge, as well as plots in Vrnjačka Banja and Banja Koviljača. The founding act also defined the obligations of the Serbian Medical Society, which assumed care for the family tomb and the obligation to hold annual professional meetings dedicated to the memory of Luka Subotić. This practice was continuously maintained even after the founder’s death.

The funds of the Endowment of Dr. Vojislav M. Subotić played a significant role in financing the construction of the Home of the Serbian Medical Society, the Endowment of Dr. Steva Milosavljević, at Zeleni Venac (Kraljice Natalije 1–3). Due to a lack of funds to complete the construction, the Society used loans from the Subotić Endowment capital totaling 1,250,000 dinars, with the obligation to repay the principal and accrued interest. With the nationalization of property in 1960, by decision of the Nationalization Commission of the People’s Committee of Stari grad municipality, the entire property of the Serbian Medical Society, including the Home, passed into state ownership.

Dr. Vojislav M. Subotić also left a significant written legacy, publishing a total of 44 works, including studies of lasting value for research into the history of Serbian medicine and the Serbian Medical Society [19, 20].

**Dr. Svetislav Stefanović** (1877–1944) served as president of the Serbian Medical Society for six terms, from September 6, 1928 to October 25, 1934. During his presidency, legal and organizational issues concerning endowments, funds, and legacies were intensively addressed, enabling the start of construction of the Society's Home in 1931. Financial resources were secured through endowments and legacies of several benefactors, as well as voluntary contributions and loans from physicians. The 60th anniversary of the founding of the Society was celebrated on May 5, 1932 in the newly constructed Home (Figure 4) [21].

In addition to his medical work, Dr. Svetislav Stefanović was active in literature and culture. He studied English and comparative literature, engaged in literary translation – particularly of the works of William Shakespeare – and published poetry and prose in periodicals and separate collections.

From June 1942 until the liberation of Belgrade, he headed the Serbian Literary Cooperative as president of its Commissarial Administration. He followed the work of the International Commission for the Investigation of War Crimes, formed in July 1943 to determine the circumstances of mass executions near Vinnytsia in Ukraine. In the article “Lesson and Message from Vinnytsia,” [22] he conveyed the position of forensic experts, formed on the basis of material evidence, that the crimes were committed in 1937–1938 and carried out by members of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs during the mass purges conducted throughout the Soviet Union in those years.

After the liberation of Belgrade, he was arrested on October 22, 1944 and sentenced to death. By a decision of the Plenum of the Serbian Medical Society in 1946, he was declared unworthy of membership, primarily for ideological reasons. At a joint session held in December 2021, the Assembly of the Serbian Medical Society annulled this decision and posthumously restored all his membership rights [23, 24, 25].

After the end of the Second World War, the Serbian Medical Society resumed its work. On the role of the Society in the postwar period, Dr. Uroš Jekić, then Minister of Public Health of Serbia, wrote in the editorial of the first postwar issue of *Serbian Archives of Medicine*:

“The renewal of the work of the Serbian Medical Society, which fundamentally changes the essence of its activities; the gathering and linking of all medical forces in the country through the Serbian Medical Society; the relaunch of the *Serbian Archives*, through whose pages the spirit of the new era should flow – these are further proofs of a fortunate development of our medical service” [26].

The first postwar assembly of the Society was held from 14 to 16 April 1946 in the hall of the Society’s Home. The election of Prof. Dr. Kosta Todorović as president indicated the desire of the delegates not to interrupt the continuity of the Society’s work even under the new circumstances created by the revolutionary change of the social system. The previous president, Dr. Milan Petrović, was elected president of the Supervisory Board. The “Rules of the Serbian Medical Society” were unanimously adopted, enabling the Society to “turn inward and devote itself to organizational and professional issues” [27].

Speaking about the importance of establishing branches in all places in the Republic of Serbia where conditions existed, Dr. Čedomil Plavšić stated:

“In the Society’s branches, the entire social life should take place, and the *Rules* therefore state that the tasks of the branches are in fact the tasks of the Society. (...) It is necessary that all physicians in the interior, with full attention and love, make efforts not only to establish branches but also to cooperate intensively within them, to elevate and improve them, because the people and our small state will benefit from this, as will we ourselves” [28].

The Assembly also adopted a Resolution which, among other things, called for the

establishment of a School of Dental Medicine [29].

**Academician Kosta Todorović** (1887–1975) (Figure 5) was the first postwar president of the Society, from April 14, 1946 to March 20, 1949. He had been a long-standing member of the Society and, in the interwar period, vice-president under Svetislav Stefanović and Momčilo Ivković. His election as president marked the beginning of the “golden age” of the Serbian Medical Society. Thanks to his work – which Dr. Vladimir Stanojević said “served as a bridge for the transition from our rich cultural heritage to contemporary creativity” – the Society managed to preserve its identity in the early postwar years, when organizations originating in the old regime were not viewed favorably [30]. He also succeeded in having the Society recognized by the new authorities as a partner in addressing numerous health problems that had persisted in Serbia for decades. During his mandate, the more extensive establishment of branches and specialist sections began.

As part of the revitalization of the Society’s work, the series “Library of the Serbian Medical Society” was founded. All professional publications of the Society, except *Serbian Archives* and the *Annual Reports*, were included in this series. During Todorović’s presidency, numerous branches were established, the work of sections founded before the Second World War was renewed, and new ones were created (cardiology, neuropsychiatry, gynecology and obstetrics, otorhinolaryngology, dermatovenereology, and others). The proposal to establish a Section for the History of Medicine and Pharmacy was “enthusiastically welcomed by Prof. Dr. Kosta Todorović” [31].

This section would in 1955 establish the Museum of Serbian Medicine of the Serbian Medical Society. During Todorović’s mandate, the Dental Section launched a formal initiative to establish the School of Dental Medicine in Belgrade (1948).

The second postwar president of the Society, from March 20, 1949 to March 28, 1954, was

**Prof. Dr. Uroš Jekić** (1896–1980). As Minister of Health in the Government of the Republic of Serbia, he contributed to the renewal of the Society's work, and as its president he organized the first postwar Congress of Physicians of Serbia (1952), which “represented one of the most significant events in the postwar history of the Society and made a major contribution to solving health problems throughout the Republic” [32].

In April 1974, the Serbian Medical Society held its 87th regular assembly and adopted a new statute, harmonized with the *Constitution* of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia adopted in February of the same year. The new Constitution imposed a model of collective governance, so that instead of a president, the Society elected a Presidency with a one-year rotating chairmanship. In such a short mandate, it was not possible to implement more substantial activities. Enthusiasm for work in the branches began to weaken, and membership declined, so that by 1980 it had fallen to a quarter of the total number of physicians. By comparison, in 1963 the proportion of members relative to the total number of physicians and dentists was 92%, and in 1973 it was 75%.

The presidents of the Presidency of the Serbian Medical Society were: Petar Stefanović (1924–1999), Borislav Najdanović (1916–1987), Aleksandar Dimitrijević (1942–2012), Milenko Lalić (1922–2004), and Dragan Kuburović (born 1935). Professor Dragan Kuburović is the only dentist to have headed the Society in its more than century-and-a-half-long existence.

From the Assembly held in 1983, the Serbian Medical Society abandoned the concept of “presidencies” and once again elected a president of the Society, leading to a series of positive changes that revitalized the Society.

**Professor Petar Korolija** (1925–2004) served as president from October 7, 1983 to November 13, 1987. During his mandate, the City Assembly of Belgrade granted the Society the building of the Eye Clinic in Džordža Vašingtona street for permanent use. The organization of multi-

day symposia titled “Advances in Diagnosis and Treatment” was initiated, the practice of the professors of the Faculty of Medicine delivering lectures in branches outside Belgrade was renewed, and a larger number of specialist sections were established.

The political disintegration of Yugoslavia, initiated by the adoption of the 1974 Constitution, led to the collapse of the state in the bloody civil war of the 1990s. The Serbian Medical Society suffered severe consequences. Sanctions, inflation, and war led to a decline in membership and activity. A major credit goes to **Academician Vojin Šulović** (1923–2008), president of the Society from November 13, 1987 to April 1, 1996, for preserving the Society even under such extremely unfavorable conditions. Despite the difficult situation, Congresses of Physicians of Serbia were held in 1992, 1993, and 1996, and five specialist sections were established.

The true revival of the Serbian Medical Society began with the election of **Academician Radoje Čolović** (born 1944) (Figure 6) as its president on January 30, 2009. During 14 years at the helm of the Society, until November 17, 2023, he made a significant contribution to its reputation. Thanks to his charisma and enthusiasm, numerous branches were founded, doubling the number of members; the work of sections that had been dormant for years, even decades, was revitalized and renewed. During his mandate, the Society was awarded the Order of Sretenje, Second Class, and the Order of Saint Sava, Second Class (2012), and in 2022, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the Society, the Order of Sretenje, First Class. At the Assembly held on November 17, 2023, he was elected an honorary member and honorary president of the Society.

Through his work in the Society, Academician Radoje Čolović “raised for himself a monument more lasting than bronze” (*Exegi monumentum aere perennius* – Horace, *Ode 3.30*). In addition to strengthening the Society, his engagement was marked by the renovation of the Society’s headquarters building in Džordža Vašingtona street, as well as the Home of the Serbian

Medical Society in Kraljice Natalije street.

The current leadership of the Serbian Medical Society, headed by President Prof. **Dr. Milan A. Nedeljković** (born 1957) (Figure 7), elected on November 17, 2023, has defined as the main goals of its mandate the positioning of the Society within the Law on Health Care, increasing membership, and encouraging branches and sections to engage more actively in continuing education. At the Assembly session held on February 6, 2025, two important decisions were adopted: to define the Serbian Medical Society as a scientific society through amendments to the statute, and to initiate the procedure for returning the Museum and Library from the Museum of Science and Technology to the Society.

The presidents of the Serbian Medical Society also included: Mladen Janković (1831–1885), Lazar Dokić (1846–1893), Mihailo Mika Marković (1847–1911), Mihailo Petrović (1863–1934), Momčilo K. Ivković, Đorđe Joanović (1871–1932), Milan Jovanović Batut (1847–1940), Svetozar Moačanin (1884–1962), Milan Petrović (1886–1963), Radivoje Berović (1900–1975), Jezdirmir Studic (1902–1960), Čedomil Plavšić (1902–1986), Dragomir Karajović (1899–1964), Vojislav Danilović (1910–1981), Aleksandar Mezić (1910–1973), Srboljub Stojiljković (1922–1974), Dragomir Mladenović (1919–2017), Vladimir Paunović (1942–2007), Zoran Ivanković (born 1951), and Vojkan Stanić (born 1950).

## CONCLUSION

The historical development of the Serbian Medical Society, viewed through the prism of its highest normative acts and the activities of its presidents, demonstrates an institution of exceptional stability, adaptability, and continuity. From the adoption of the first Constitution in 1872 to the most recent amendments to the Statute in 2025, the Society's normative

framework has changed in accordance with social, political, and ideological circumstances, while its fundamental objectives – professional cohesion of physicians, advancement of the health service, and development of medical science – have remained unchanged.

A special place in the history of the Society is occupied by the office of president, whose powers, despite numerous statutory changes, have always played a key role in directing the Society's work. Although the title of the office, the method of election, and the length of the mandate have changed – from one-year terms, through collective governance during the period of self-management socialism, to the contemporary model of multi-year mandates – the influence of the individuals who led the Society has remained decisive. The history of the Society clearly shows that periods of greatest progress and institutional strengthening are associated with strong, visionary, and authoritative presidents.

From founders and early presidents such as Aćim Medović and Vladan Đorđević, through reformers of the early twentieth century, interwar builders of the Society's institutional and material foundations, to postwar restorers and contemporary leaders, the presidents of the Society were not merely administrators but also bearers of broader social, scientific, and cultural initiatives. Their actions enabled the Society to survive wars, changes of state systems, ideological breaks, and economic crises, while retaining its status as the oldest and most prestigious medical organization in Serbia.

The contemporary development of the Serbian Medical Society – grounded in the restoration of a strong presidential function, the strengthening of branches and sections, and clearer positioning within the legal system of the Republic of Serbia – represents a logical continuation of its historical tradition. It is precisely in the combination of normative continuity and strong personal engagement of the leadership that the key to the longevity and social significance of the Serbian Medical Society lies.

**Ehics:** The authors declare that the article was written according to the ethical standards of the Serbian Archives of Medicine as well as ethical standards of institutions for each author involved.

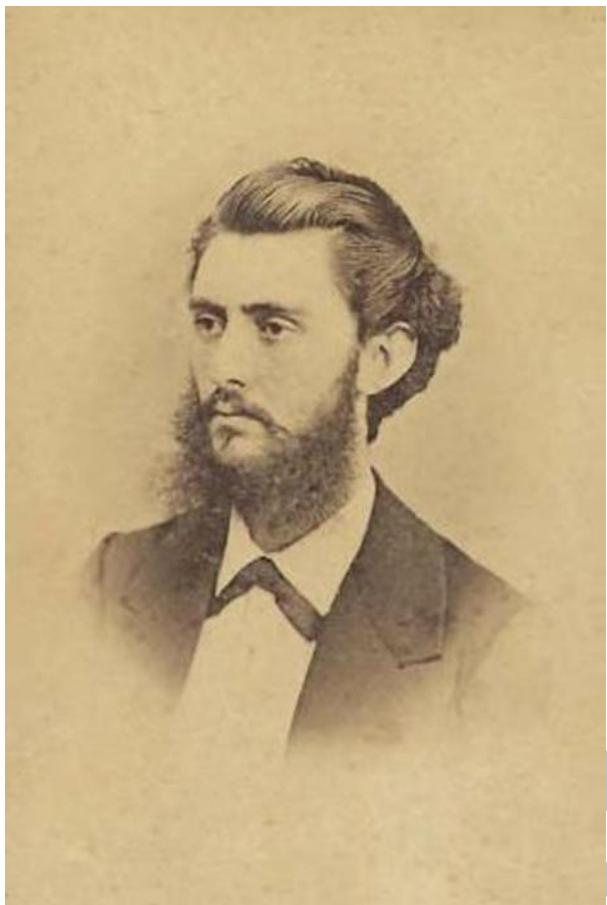
**Conflict of interest:** None declared.

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**Figure 1.** Dr. Aćim Medović (1815–1893)



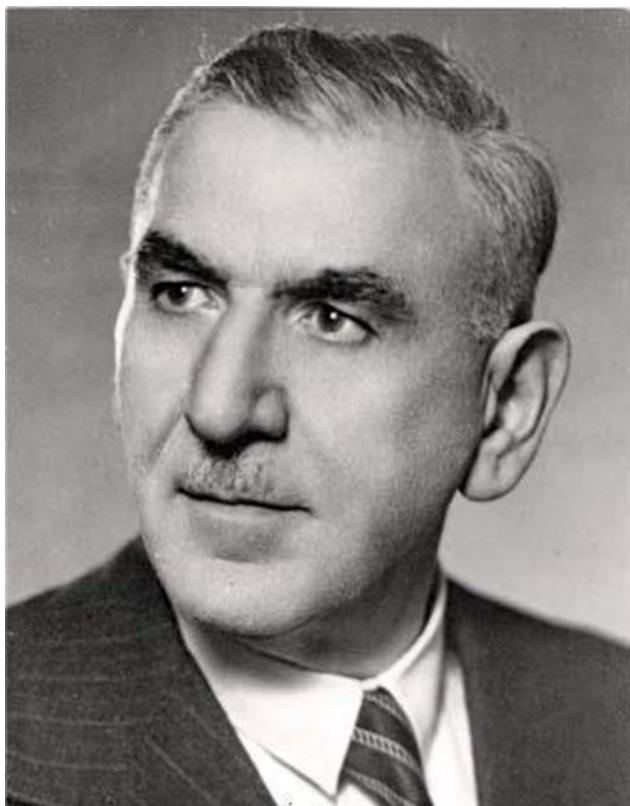
**Figure 2.** Dr. Vladan Đorđević (1844–1930)



**Figure 3.** Dr. Vojislav J. Subbotić (1859–1923)



**Figure 4.** The Home of the Serbian Medical Society, Endowment of Dr. Steva Milosavljević



**Figure 5.** Academician Kosta Todorović (1887–1975)



**Figure 6.** Academician Radoje Čolović (1944)



**Figure 7.** The leadership of the Serbian Medical Society in 2025 (from the right: Prof. Dr. Milan A. Nedeljković, President of the Serbian Medical Society; Dr. Zoran Vacić, Secretary General of the Serbian Medical Society; Prof. Dr. Dragoslav Bašić, Vice President of the Serbian Medical Society; Prof. Dr. Nebojša Stanković, President of the Academy of Medical Sciences of the Serbian Medical Society; Prof. Dr. Nebojša Radovanović, Secretary General of the Academy of Medical Sciences of the Serbian Medical Society)