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100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF Hans Selye

SELYE 100 STRESS 07

"Hans Selye" Hungarian Society of Behavioral Sciences and Medicine

János Selye was highly cultured with a wide intellectual horizon. The idea of „**stress**" is inseparable from his name. He was a versatile person and a magnetic, charismatic lecturer. His outstanding scientific achievement was internationally recognized. He created publicity for the optimum stress level in everyday life.
Selye wasn't purely a scientist, but he specialized also on dissemination of the sciences.
He addressed common men with his books and statements in an interesting way and clearly.

Curriculum of Hans Selye (1907-1982)

Selye in 1940

János Selye was born on 26 January **1907**, in Vienna, Austria, from Hungarian father and Austrian mother. The young Selye completed his elementary and secondary schools in Komárom. Presently the secondary school and the Hungarian University is named after Selye.

He began his medical studies at the German University in Prague in **1924**. He attended several semesters in Paris and Rome and graduated at the University of Prague in **1929**.

He began his researches at Experimental Pathology Institute in Prague. He took his doctorate at Prague University. He became a Doctor of Medicine in **1929** and Doctor of Chemical in **1931**. He was an assistant in experimental Pathology there for three years.

He worked at the Department of Biochemical Hygiene of John Hopkins University in Baltimore when he awarded Rockefeller Research Fellowship in **1931**. Next year he got the fellowship again and moved to the McGill University of Montreal and worked there as a biochemist lecturer, then an assistant professor. He was appointed assistant professor of biochemistry in **1934**, then in histology in **1937**. In **1942** he attained the degree of Doctor of Sciences.

He turned his attention to the research of **stress** in **1936**. His first publication about stress was issued in Nature in 1936.

From **1945** to **1977** he directed of **Institute of Experimental Medicine and Surgery** at the Montreal French University (Institut de Medicine et de Chirurgie Experimentale). He remained active after he retired as founder president of the **International Institute of Stress**.

He died far from his native country in Montreal on 15 October **1982**.

Portrait of Hans Selye

Life of the Institute of Experimental Medicine and Surgery

Bust in Selye János University, Komárom

The focus of the Institute was medical research and as such, in developing or studying the different disease entities or animal models of human illnesses, with particular emphasis in endocrinology, histology, macroscopic anatomy, surgery and toxicology. The indestructible energy and spirit of Professor Hans Selye nurtured and recreated day-to-day the vital scientific atmosphere of the institute.

At the main entrance of the Institute of Experimental Medicine and Surgery, near the elevator, there was the inscription:

"Neither the prestige of your subject, and the power of your instruments, nor the extent of your learnedness and the precision of your planning, can substitute for the originality of your approach and the keenness of your observation."

His research group was international, there were students/scientists from the Soviet Union, from Korea, Japan, Egypt, Turkey, Italy, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Argentina, and of course, from Canada. There was a world map hanging on the wall of the corridor in the institute, on which little spot lights signaled those cities and countries where the young visiting researchers had come from. Hungary was the brightest spot of all.

There was a clinical atmosphere in the daily running of Dr. Selye's Institute, as evidenced by daily "rounds" of all of the laboratories and animals (similar to medical rounds at the hospitals); autopsies of animals; the existence of different departments such as Histology, Electron Microscopy, Biochemistry, Pharmacy, Protocol/Archives, Library, all of which supports the clinical atmosphere notion.

After each „visit" Selye and the other researchers went to the autopsy room, where Hans Selye performed autopsy, and the other researchers in the meanwhile presented their daily plans for experiments. Selye examined all the animals, which meant hundreds per day. The experiment plan had to presented to him in a most peculiar way, as Selye developed a special code of abbreviations, the „Symbolic Shorthand System" (SSS).

University of Montreal

McGill University

Discussion in the autopsy room

Selye started his work in the institute at 6 a.m., before any of his employees, usually after an early morning swim or cycling. From 6 to 8.30 a.m. the most intensive and focused work of writing various papers ensued. He came to work on Sundays as well.

For his weekdays he worked 12 hours a day (from 6:00 in the morning until 6:00 in the evening), and during the weekend he took it easy and stayed from 6:00 in the morning until only 4:00 in the evening or sometimes even until 2:00 in the afternoon.

Before noon Prof. Selye would make the rounds of the labs, and would check the course of experiments.

At 3 p.m. Prof. Selye would start his autopsy meeting, during which he would analyse the results of the experiments with his characteristic magnifying glass and head lamp.

This event was succeeded by discussions related to scientific papers, newspaper articles, projects for further experiments, and other work. Prof. Selye left the Institute at 6 p.m., and refrained from professional issues for the rest of the day.

His productivity is proved by numerous publications, more than 30 books and nearly 2000 articles. Hans Selye wrote numerous articles, and his results were summarised in books and compared with others' results. His books were written in "analytic and synthetic" method. All chapters included also his own personal standpoint on the respective topic.

János Selye had great achievements in various other research fields: cardiovascular diseases, cardiac necrosis, calciphylaxis, gerontology, mast cells, inflammations disease, endocrinology, phenomenon of thrombohemorrhagy event, hormones and resistance.

Selye was honorary professor of 18 universities, member of the Royal Society of Canada, honorary member of further 43 scientific societies. Honorary citizen of several cities and countries, had received numerous high ranking awards and distinctions. He was nominated for the Nobel Prize over 10 years, but he didn't get it, maybe because he tried to explain a wide range of diseases with his stress theory, covering too extensive medical fields.

*Special thanks to the authors of **"STRESS"** - Selye centennial memorial book, the poster was made on the basis of their work.*