

Celebrating the Life of Dr. Igor Bitenc

A legacy driven by the spirit of learning

It is with deep appreciation that we reflect on the inspirational life of Dr. Igor Bitenc, who passed away January 5, 2014.

Dr. Bitenc was born in 1925 in Slovenia and came to Canada in 1953. The following year, he began his residency at Montréal's Royal Victoria Hospital and then elected to stay in Quebec to practice as an orthopaedic surgeon. It was in 1982 that he offered to sponsor an annual Traveling Fellowship for a young orthopaedic surgeon from Yugoslavia.

The Fellowship, named in memory of Dr. Bitenc's late mother, Mrs. Anica Bitenc, was funded by an annual endowment from Dr. Bitenc and managed by the Canadian Orthopaedic Foundation.

In 2007, Dr. Bitenc commented, "When I started the Traveling Fellowship, it was difficult for Fellows from Yugoslavia to travel and thus learn from colleagues in other countries. While that has changed in recent years, I believe it is still important to support and give surgeons in Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia an opportunity to learn from colleagues abroad."

Through his generosity, the Canadian surgical community remains inspired by the gracious commitment made to helping fellow surgeons. The three-week fellowship has positively impacted many surgeons, ultimately resonating into benefits for citizens of the communities served.

The first Fellow, Dr. Ranko Bilic from Yugoslavia, completed his Canadian itinerary in 1985. Since then, 22 Fellows from the former Yugoslavia have participated in the program.

Dr. Bitenc has ensured the Fellowship will continue for many years with a gracious bequest gift of \$300,000.



Photo courtesy of Prof. Zelimir Mikic

A Typical Fellowship Itinerary

Every year, the orthopaedic association in one of the three Balkan countries selects a Fellow and informs the Canadian Orthopaedic Association of their choice. The Fellow learns of his/her selection about a year in advance. Along with the Exchange Fellowships Committee Chairman, the COA then builds an itinerary.

Typically, during their tours from late May to mid-June, visiting Fellows go to various orthopaedic centres across Canada and are invited to attend the COA Annual Meeting.

Participating Fellows have commented on the benefits of learning from the techniques and treatments used in Canada, as well as on the kindness of the Canadian host surgeons and cities.

"On behalf of the Canadian Orthopaedic Foundation, I invite the surgeon community to celebrate the life of Dr. Bitenc." comments Dr. James P. Waddell, Foundation Chair. "I admire Dr. Bitenc for his generosity and commitment to giving back. We are honoured to carry out his legacy."

Anica Bitenc Fellows 1985-2014

1985	Dr. Ranko Bilic
1986	Dr. Goran Ercegan
1989	Dr. Rastko Stok and Dr. Zoran Blagojevic
1990	Dr. Miroslav Lazarov
1991	Dr. Davor Popovic
1997	Dr. Domagoj Delimar, Croatia
1998	Dr. Drago Dolinar, Slovenia
1999	Dr. Nenad Vladimir Atanasov, Macedonia
2000	Dr. Robert Kolundzic, Croatia
2001	Dr. Robert Košak, Slovenia
2002	Dr. Hrvoje Klobučar, Croatia
2003	Dr. Dragan Savic, Serbia
2005	Dr. Borut Pompe, Slovenia and Dr. Goran Biani, Croatia
2006	Dr. Aleksandar Lešić, Serbia & Montenegro
2007	Dr. Klemen Strazar, Slovenia
2008	Dr. Denis Trsek, Croatia
2009	Dr. Vladimir Harhaji, Serbia
2010	Dr. Blaž Mavrič, Slovenia
2011	Dr. Marko Bergovec, Croatia
2012	Dr. Nemanja Slavkovic, Serbia
2013	Dr. Gregor Renik, Slovenia
2014	Dr. Tomislav Smoljanovic, Croatia