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Zdravje in bolezen na Pohorju
[*Health and Disease in Pohorje*]

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Health and Disease in Pohorje is the first comprehensive book in the field of historical-humanistic (folk) medicine for this pre-Alpine, mostly wooded, medium-high mountain range located south of the Drava River in north-eastern Slovenia. It addresses the cultural and medical heritage of the pre-industrial era until the first half of the 20th century and skilfully intertwines the ethnological, anthropological, literary, historical, medical and public health resources and field data. The book presents the general health situation of Pohorje: the most common diseases, epidemics, injuries,

disability, and care for the elderly, the preservation of health as well as economic and cultural reasons for such health conditions. The spiritual world and its folk religiousness with elements of pagan worship, as well as faith in the Christian God and magic, helped to alleviate health problems. In the

book, some methods of treatment that have so far not yet been presented in folk-medicinal publications, e.g. treatments using ants, scorpions, and conifers are also presented. The described health conditions during the period of predominant economic autarky, when the health and veterinary services were poorly organized and linguistically and financially distant from the majority of the peasant population, are intertwined with high mortality, incurable diseases, frequent occupational or war injuries, as well as famine. The majority of the diseases that were fatal in the past, e.g. the plague, cholera and dysentery, have been eradicated today thanks to vaccinations, improved sanitary conditions and organized health care. Returning to the folk medicine of previous centuries, in a time without health insurance, predominant inaccessibility of doctors, mistrust of vaccination campaigns, paid health services, folk self-medication and reliance on mutual help, is also a reminder of what the current reckless disintegration of public health can bring us.

The understandable and didactically written scientific text is kind to a reader. Older texts and folk expressions are additionally explained in terms of modern medicine, bringing them closer to the language and the views of the 21st century. The book is equipped with a wealth of illustrations, lists of literature, resources and images, a comprehensive subject index and index of places that make it easier to locate data. Excellently structured, methodologically accurate, with exiting content, this attractive and lively book sets new standards for future regional research on folk-medicine heritage. In this way, the book invites to read and reflect on healthcare workers, natural science researchers, humanists and all those who consider the green region of Pohorje as a source of health and well-being.

The significance of the cultural and ethnomedical heritage until the mid-20th century goes beyond the disciplinary boundaries of ethnology and anthropology to public health, the history of medicine, integrative medicine and folk religion. That is why the book *Health and Disease in Pohorje* is a welcome historic and medical overview. It can also help doctors with communication, since they often encounter patients who have unscientific beliefs about health and illness, or perceive them as one of their own, in traditional culture founded ways. Using the knowledge of former local ethnomedicinal practices, the doctors may improve the cultural sensitivity.

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