

A distinguished anatomist and pedagogue has passed

Facultas nostra 2021, 10 (October)

Both current and past students, employees and many others associated with the Faculty of Medicine in Pilsen mourn the death of a great man. Docent Pavel Fiala has passed on. He was a legendary figure of our faculty, an academic who molded entire generations of students. We bring to you some of his colleagues' memories of his life. The comments in-between those texts come from messages on our faculty's Facebook page. With profound respect for this exceptional man's legacy our editorial staff would like to commemorate his many professional and personal qualities.

In his 74th year of life, doc. RNDr. Pavel Fiala, CSc., has left this world on 17.7.2021. He worked as the director of the Department of anatomy since 1990, for a total of 31 years. Docent Fiala started his work in the Department of anatomy in 1970, just after finishing his studies at the Charles University's Faculty of science in Prague. He came to the Department of anatomy as an assistant by invitation from then soon-to-be professor Jiří Heřt. From that point onward he worked at the Department of anatomy for the remainder of his life. From the very beginning of his career, he used his knowledge of oil painting and started drawing organs from self-dissected samples. He has taught probably all of the graduates of the Faculty of Medicine in Pilsen. He understood anatomy well and his lectures were not a convoluted cluster of new information, but a precisely organized description of anatomical structures and their mutual relations. During his extensive career, he also repeatedly worked at a university in Kuwait. For over 30 years he also taught Danish medical students when they came to Pilsen to complete a topographical autopsy. Docent Fiala also worked as a vice-dean for master's studies in English. Among other duties, in this role he was responsible for the entrance exams. He tirelessly traveled through Europe and Asia and organized entrance exams for students from far-away countries. He then became their partner during their studies and helped them with the struggles of studying in a distant and unknown land. During the 70th anniversary of our faculty's founding, docent Fiala was awarded the gold commemorative medal of the Charles University.

Docent Fiala was proud of his south bohemian origin. Everyone knew he spent his rare free time in south bohemia at his family cottage. There he spent his time painting. Recently he gave me a present - a painting, of what else than south bohemian landscape. We all remember docent Fiala as an embodiment of a true gentleman. Meeting him was always an unforgettable experience, especially in his office with an entire-wall-spanning library and a cup of exotic coffee he so carefully prepared. With him, our faculty loses one of the building blocks that helped shape its 76 years of existence. We have all lost an extraordinary colleague, a rare breed of man, a close friend.

Prof. MUDr. Jindřich Fínek, Ph.D., MHA Faculty dean

» R.B.« We remember him with love - me, my wife and my son, who had the luck of seeing him teach during the last year. I have never needed so many different pencils as during docent Fiala's lessons. Those were good times.

Docent RNDr. Pavel Fiala, CSc. was my teacher, my friend, a guide through both life and work, a protector and also a part of my family. He was a vital source of inspiration for many a student and teacher of the Faculty of Medicine in Pilsen. He was a great and irreplaceable teacher, who helped many foreign students make their way through the complicated life of studying abroad far away from their families. Most of all, he was an amazing man who devoted his life not only to his family, but also to the Faculty of Medicine in Pilsen. He served loyally, with admirable selflessness, exemplary drive and incredible diligence. I will never forget docent Fiala. I am sure I will not be the only one

cherishing his memory. He used to say: "Anatomy is the mother of the medical science." For many of us, he became a beloved father who helped us, motivated us and showed us the values most important in life. Most of all he taught us the importance of hard work, a sense of purpose in all our hard fought efforts and the greatest of all virtues - honesty and forgiveness. He taught us to love our neighbor and to pursue an enlightened good. For those of us who have been lucky enough to know him more personally, he became an unforgettable source of familial values. Dear docent Fiala, allow me to thank you for all of this on behalf of all your students. You remain an inspiring figure for many, even now, that you are no longer with us. Rest in Peace, Mr. Fiala!

Your former student and lifelong friend MUDr. Vasileios Tzigkounakis, Ph.D.

» T.B. « I will never forget docent Fiala's lectures and the stress of trying to find the right colored pencil in time ! My condolences to his family and colleagues.

Docent Fiala was undoubtedly a hard-working man. His way of doing things had a particular gracefulness to it. I was lucky enough to get to know him more than as just his student. As I return to water to fish, I also return to my memories of him. He was more than a great anatomist, lecturer, painter and fisherman..... He was extraordinary.

MUDr. Martin Pitra

Docent Fiala - the first important person I met during my entrance exams for the Faculty of Medicine in Pilsen in 2010. I remember you wished all the candidates "good luck" with all the sincerity of a loving father. On that day we started our path on the journey of Medicine. You were an inspiring scientist, serving to further our understanding with a great passion for anatomy. This passion could be seen during your extraordinary lectures. Your impressive way of drawing and explaining every piece of the human body were unforgettable. Your doors were always open to all of us, your students. You helped us, listened to our troubles and thoughts. You always found a way to solve our problems, regardless of how difficult it was for you. You always found a way to remove the obstacles on our path to become physicians. You had our back from the first moment of our studies until the day you left this world. I feel blessed that you have been my mentor both in medicine but also in life. Dear docent Fiala, I thank you for all what you have done for us and for the university. I thank you for your patience, your love, your smile, your sense of humor, your kindness, your help, your advice and your knowledge. I thank you for making me the doctor that I am today. I thank you for being you. It was an honor knowing you. Condolences to your family. May you rest in peace. So long, our docent and vice-dean.

With profound respect, MUDr. George Liapis

» R.B. « As all the medics of his time know - " The chestnuts are in bloom. It's high time to start learning!"«

When I started my path as an anatomy teacher and researcher, I was fascinated by bones - how it developed and reconstructed itself under different biomechanical conditions. Jiří Heřt and Pavel Fiala were the people to see in regards to this topic. Professor Heřt was not working at the department of anatomy at that time. Due to political reasons, he was made an occupational physician in a pipe mill in Chomutov. His student, Pavel Fiala, continued his research. The papers coming from Pilsen in this area were extraordinary. You could clearly see the orientation of osteons on the colored bone samples they made and you could easily tell what kind of forces made the bone shape itself into such a form. Professor Fiala was also a gifted painter, so he could brilliantly document his work. His results showed, that even with minimal technical equipment, you could make the world know your work if you had the right sort of vision. As a complete beginner I was delighted of what a

friendly and familial environment I was greeted by in Pilsen's anatomy and histology departments. I was always looking forward to my visits. I am proud, that I have had the honor of meeting such great people like the late professor Kos, Slípka and Kočová. Pilsen's morphological congresses, where prof. Kos served Pilsner beer, doc. Fiala was the waiter and prof. Slípka dressed himself up as a mannequin were unforgettable. Unfortunately Pavel Fiala is another one of the old boys to leave us. Their successors prof. Králíčková and prof. Tonar continue their legacy of first-class science. I hope that they can create such a great environment as their predecessors have.

Prof. MUDr. Karel Smetana, DrSc. Department of anatomy 1. LF UK

I got to know the work of professor Heřt early on in my studies since skeletal injuries were a great interest of mine since the very beginning. When I started my work at the Department of anatomy after my graduation, I learned that prof. Heřt's successor in regards to this topic was doc. Fiala. At that time he just turned 50. He was full of energy, very forthcoming and more than willing to answer my questions. When I searched for an answer why the curvature of diaphyses of long bones changed with age, I saw no better alternative than to ask my colleagues from Pilsen. In no time at all I received a study on exactly that topic. This was one of my first experiences with Pavel Fiala. We often met at Czech anatomical society congresses, often hosted in Pilsen. We last met on such an occasion in 2016. At that time we were familiar with each other, and I dare say we became friends. I could always count on a swift answer whenever I needed his help. Most of all I cherished his hand-painted new year wishes with beautiful motifs of countryside or nature. The news of his passing came unexpectedly. During this year's congress, we could only honor him with a moment of silent remembrance.

Doc. MUDr. Ondřej Naňka, Ph.D. Department of anatomy 1. LF UK

» L.Š. « It is a pity he couldn't stay with us anymore. When reading his name I recalled his famed "Feneis pinning" - a cherry on top of our exam... I remember him with love.

In life we meet many people, but few of them ever become our real friends. For me, one of those rare people was Pavel Fiala - a great man, an outstanding anatomist, docent, the director of the Department of anatomy, a former faculty vice-dean, a workaholic, a great painter, a recognized professional with a wide expertise, a marvelous pedagogue and organizer. He came to the Medical faculty of Pilsen 51 years ago as an assistant professor at the Department of anatomy. After twenty years, he took over as its head. It was a happy day for the faculty when he became the vice-dean for education of foreign students in 1995. We became close after working together in faculty leadership. In the 90s we went on a business trip to Great Britain, Denmark, Sweden and the Federal republic of Germany. I got to know Pavel's diplomatic abilities, his knowledge of languages and other attributes that made him such a great man. In the 90s our faculty started an English program for foreign students. This meant a greater renown for our faculty and more financial profits too. Pavel Fiala himself invited hundreds of foreign students to our faculty. He helped prepare entrance exams for them in their home countries and organized their education here. Only a few of us can truly appreciate the amount of work that goes into teaching foreign students that come from different cultures and backgrounds from all over the world. Anatomy is among the most difficult of the pre-clinical subjects. Thanks to his extraordinary talent for art Pavel Fiala supplemented his lectures by creating anatomical drawings that all his students recall to this day. Pavel Fiala also used his talent as a landscapist. His pictures often depict the surroundings of his birth town Katovice and his favorite river Otava. Pavel Fiala has been among the most influential people of the Faculty of Medicine in Pilsen. To me, he was a friend I will remember with respect and admiration.

Prof. MUDr. Jan Kilian, DrSc.

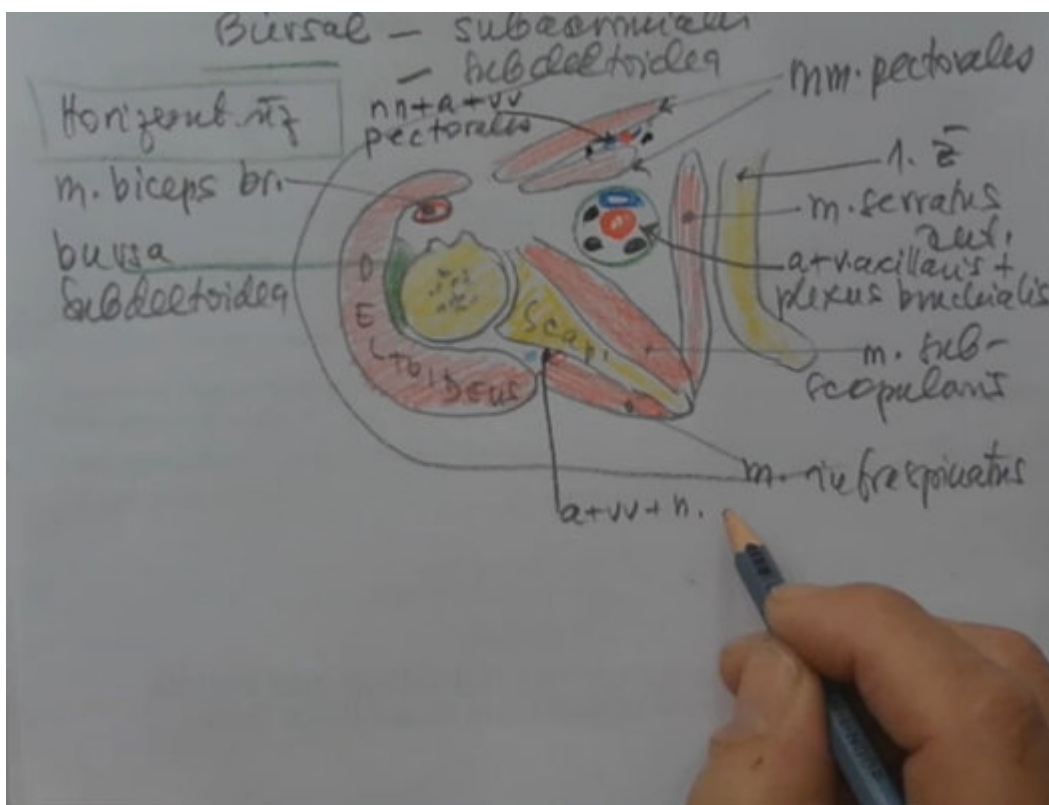
Translation of the texts: LFP

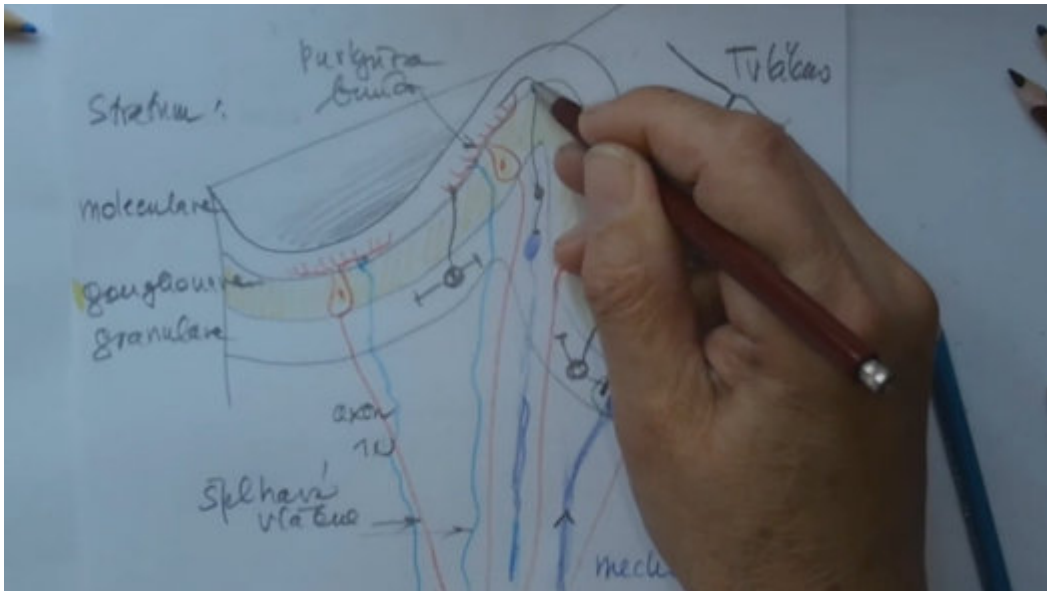


For his long-standing scientific and educational work, Czech anatomical society has awarded doc. Fiala with a commemorative Jesenius' plaque.



In his office at the Department of anatomy, 2016





Anatomical illustrations done in real time, 2021



Autopsy room, Anatomy course, 1976



Autopsy course, Danish students, 1994



With prof. Jiří Valenta, Employees of the department of anatomy and Danish students, autopsy course, 2004



LFP graduation ceremony, 2017



Posing during the 2016 Faculty Garden Festival. Car model by Magdalena Fialová