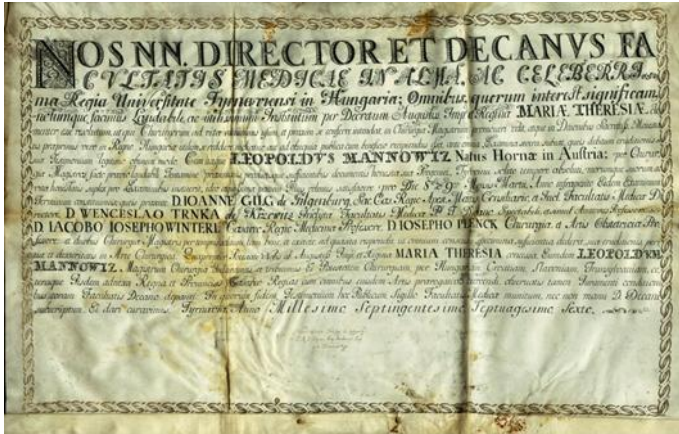


From the Medical Faculty at Nagyszombat to Semmelweis University:

A Historical Overview, 1769-2010

1769-1848

The roots of our University reach back to the 18th century, when Queen Maria Theresa

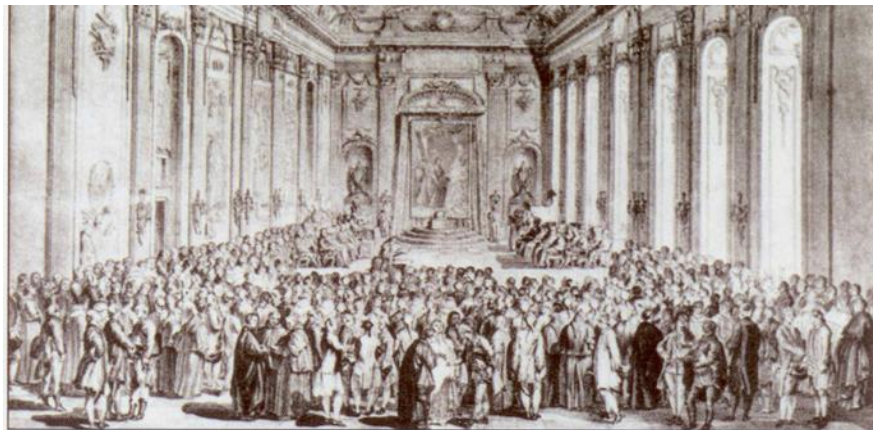


Master of Surgery certificate (1776)

added a medical faculty to the only Hungarian university at the time, the University of Nagyszombat. As the first step, in a charter dated July 17, 1769, the Queen raised the university to the status of a “royal institute” and supplied it with grants meant to finance the Medical Faculty, which was to be established shortly thereafter.

The formation of the new Faculty began following the Queen's decree of November 7, 1769. The organizing work was vested on her Dutch court physician, Gerard van Swieten, who had previously organized the empire's health care system and modernized the University of Vienna as well.

The new Medical Faculty came into being in November 1770, with only five departments. It was given a building of its own in 1772, but soon the whole university left the small town of Nagyszombat behind,



The university's ceremonial opening in Buda, 1780

moving to the center of the country: Buda. Although the university had been functioning continuously since its establishment, the ceremonial opening and re-foundation of the university, held in the Buda Castle, only took place in June of 1780, three years following the move. After the city of Buda did not prove to be a suitable location for the university

either, it moved on to Pest in 1784. The Medical Faculty finally found a home in a former Jesuits' monastery at the corner of Hatvani and Újvilág streets.



The Diploma Inaugurale (1780)

Meanwhile, the number of the Faculty's departments and students steadily increased, with the latter exceeding the impressive one thousand mark by the early 1830s. In addition to training physicians, the Faculty also trained surgeon masters, civil surgeons, pharmacist masters, veterinarians and midwives. The language of instruction in the Medical Faculty was Latin, although all the other faculties taught their courses in either German or Hungarian.

The declaration of Hungarian as the official state language as part of the nationalist reforms of the 1840s found medical education wholly unprepared, as a sophisticated set of technical medical terminologies did not yet exist in Hungarian. Indeed, the profes-

sors of the Medical Faculty ended up contributing greatly to the eventual creation of a modern medical technical vocabulary in the national vernacular.

The Revolution of 1848 and subsequent War of Independence also marked a turning point in the history of what was then known as Budapest University. In the April Laws, a separate article (1848: XIX. art.) dealt with the university, declaring its independence, as well as the liberal principle of academic freedom. A significant portion of the university's students and staff got involved in the War of Independence which broke out that September, partly by undertaking medical officer service in the *Honvéd* defence force, and partly by organizing army medic courses and military health care management. Following the imperial victory, retaliation did not delay either.

1849-1919

The defeat of the War of Independence severely affected the Faculty staff, some of whom emigrated (e.g. Schoepf-Merei), and others of whom were imprisoned (e.g. Balassa, Zlamál). The long-term development plans that had been conceived in 1848 had to be taken off the agenda for a long time.

Nonetheless, some modernization did take place: from 1850 on, secondary school graduation (G.C.E) became compulsory for admission, and the post of Faculty Director was abolished. Although practitioners were still being trained in nine departments, the surgical master program, which had previously been constantly crowded, withered and, as had happened earlier in Lemberg, Olomouc and Salzburg, was discontinued in Budapest as well. In 1872, the surgical guilds were also dissolved.

As a result of the Compromise of 1867, Hungarian again became the country's official language, i.e. the only language of instruction at the university. As a direct consequence, foreign-speaking students, who had previously arrived in large numbers from not only the countries outside the Habsburg Empire, but from the non-Hungarian territories within it as well, now disappeared from the university. The Budapest Medical Faculty thus lost its multi-ethnic character.

At the same time, the Hungarian training of doctors and pharmacists and, indeed, the profession as a whole, were met with an entirely new set of challenges. The civic and economic prosperity and the associated public health problems caused by rapid urbanization on the one hand, and the fast-paced development of medicine on the other, exerted a bilateral pressure on what was, by



Dedication of Géza Mihalkovics's statue
in front of the new Anatomy building, 1901

then, a miserable and crowded Medical Faculty. The practical part of education had been regarded weak even earlier than this, owing mostly to the lack of a large, public hospital background.

All these issues were answered through the development plan for the construction of a health institution network and for the development of higher education to serve this network. In 1872, merging the training system of surgical master and doctor of medicine and introducing a unified medical education, a second Hungarian university of sciences was founded in Kolozsvár, which also included a medical faculty. Following this development, in 1873, the

construction of brand new sites for the Budapest Medical Faculty could also commence. The construction work, which lasted until 1911, absorbed a significant amount of money, amounting to about 25 million Crowns. However, the end result was a scientific establishment that was on par with contemporary standards in all respects, capable of significant academic performance and with the capacity to train an ample number of qualified health care professionals.



Albert Szent-Györgyi (1893-1986)

From the 1880s on, the number of students enrolled in the Medical Faculty was steadily over 1000, a number which was still considered extremely high as little as fifty years ago. Starting in 1895, women could also be admitted to the medical and pharmacy courses.

During the First World War, many of the Faculty's students and teachers joined the Austro-Hungarian army. The number of serviceable hospital beds were hastily increased to 2000, half of which were reserved for the wounded. The shift to a war economy brought significant financial constraints to the university as well but, as a silver lining amid the misfortune, the majority of the construction war had already been undertaken before the

war, and so the Budapest Medical Faculty was successfully completed in spite of this.

After the war, the disarmed students returned to the university from the trenches en masse, creating an impossible situation for the institution. The so-called Aster (or, Chrysanthemum) Revolution of 1919 also caused severe problems, as did the brief proletarian dictatorship which followed soon after, and which almost immediately withdrew the university's autonomy and intruded deeply into its internal affairs. This provided a small taste of the methods the Communist dictatorship would employ some 30 years later.

1920-1951

The war, the Commune, the Romanian occupation of Budapest, the truncation of the country through the Treaty of Trianon and the general political uncertainty gave rise to extremely serious economic and social tensions, which had an impact on the university as well. Fraternal societies began to form with the participation of the veteran students, anti-Semitic riots broke out and the university, for the first time in its history, had to limit the number of students that could be admitted. In 1922, a reform to medical education was introduced, which increased the training period from five to six years and the

number of finals from three to four. In 1936, a congress held on the state of the national higher education also elaborated important recommendations for change but, of these, only those relating to the training of pharmacists were realized.



The Faculty of Medicine's teaching staff (1935)

In the interwar years, no new developments were introduced at either the University of Budapest or its Medical Faculty, as all resources were being put towards the construction – from scratch – of three universities in the countryside, two of which had been transported from territories lost by Hungary through the Treaty of Trianon. In 1936, two

clinics were also closed in this spirit of thrift. Nonetheless, the Faculty's academic performance continued to be among the leading faculties of the world, thanks to groundwork which had been laid during the years of the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy (1867-1918).

Up until 1944, the events of the Second World War did not cause remarkable problems for the university, with the exception of the compulsory military service and medical care of the wounded which involved the teaching staff. In spite of being expressly instructed to do so by the *Nyilas* (Hungarian Nazi) government, the university refused to be moved to Germany. However, even before the military siege ring completely closed around Budapest, many upper-year engineer, medical, pharmacy and veterinary students (i.e. representatives of all the majors that were regarded as important for the continuation of the war) were forcibly resettled through drafting. Thus, a total of about 600 medical and pharmacy students, together with some of the teachers and academic staff, were taken away, some to Halle and others to Austria.

The siege of Budapest caused enormous damage to the university's buildings, the value of which amounted to over 13 million gold Pengő. After the war, large-scale politically-motivated purges began among the teaching staff, the majority of whom were thus replaced.

The gradually developing Communist dictatorship eventually transformed not only the teaching staff, but the social composition of students and, basically, the entire university. In 1950, the university's namesake, Péter Pázmány (archbishop of Esztergom, who had founded the University of Nagyszombat), was deemed unacceptable by the Communist regime, and so the university's name was changed to Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE). Then, in 1951, in a broader move based on the Russian model, the medical faculties were split off from the universities of sciences and turned into independent, specialized institutions. At the same time, they were taken out from under the inspection of the Ministry of Culture and placed under the newly formed Ministry of Health. The newly named Eötvös Loránd University's Medical Faculty thus became the Budapest University of Medicine (BOTE).

1951-2010

In the post-war period, the University enjoyed a period of significant and extensive growth, as several hospitals – converted into clinics – were added to it. The University managed to establish previously missing departments, though the price of this development was the University's high degree of territorial fragmentation.



Medical Doctor's Diploma (1950)

Following the withdrawal of the University's autonomy, it was placed under the strict central control of the Ministry of Health, which even prescribed the extension of its participation in regional medical care. Research started to involve increasingly expensive areas, which consequently resulted in its lagging behind the world's wealthier nations. To make matters worse, there was a political trend of reclusion in the 1950s, due to the exclusive Soviet influence affecting even the sciences.

The organs of a truly "university nature", such as the rector's office and the faculties (then called the Faculty of General Medicine, Faculty of Dentistry and Faculty of Pharmacy, respectively), took their final form in 1955. The pharmaceutical training was moved from Eötvös Loránd University of Sciences to the Budapest University of Medicine in 1951, and the training of doctors of dentistry, in an entirely new system, commenced in 1952.

During the Revolution of 1956, which broke out on October 23 of that year, the University found itself at the center of events, with its clinics essentially taking the role of war hospitals and the University staff and students showing a truly heroic commitment to the cause. Within a few weeks, the University was afflicted by damage much more serious than that which had followed the siege of 1945. Approximately 180 instructors and employees, and a large number of students, fled the country in the immediate aftermath of the Revolution.



Medical students among the protestors during the 1956 Revolution

After the Soviet consolidation, the development of the University continued, albeit at a slower pace than before. The greatest investment of the period, the Theoretical Block at Nagyvárad tér (NET), was completed in 1978. Although this impressive structure is but one element of the grandiose plans which had been conceived in the 1960s, unfortunately, the majority of these have remained merely in the form of blueprints.

With the introduction of Goulash Communism in the 1960s, the development of contacts with the western world, albeit gradual and under close supervision, became possible. The increasingly intensified external relations promoted the return of Hungarians professionals to the international sphere, and the keeping up with scientific developments.

It was on November 7, 1969, on the bicentennial of the founding of the Medical Faculty at the University of Nagyszombat, that it decided to mark the occasion by taking the name of its most famous professor, Ignác Semmelweis, also known as “the savior of mothers”.



Ignác Semmelweis (1818-1886)

Although foreign students had been attending the University from the 1950s on, only students from those countries regarded by the political leadership as fraternal states (e.g. Albania, North Korea, East Germany, Vietnam) were permitted to attend. At that time, these students took part in the medical training in the Hungarian language. Their number increased dramatically from the 1970s onwards, as students began arriving from not only the “socialist camp”, but from the so-called Third World as well. Perhaps most significantly, training in German and English commenced in 1983 and 1989 respectively. The number of foreign students continued to rise right through the regime change, and they continue to be important pillars of the University to this day.

The process of democratization, which started in 1989, resulted in important changes for the University as well, the most significant of which was probably the restoration of its autonomy.

In the late 1990s, in the spirit of institutional integration, the reform of the network of Hungarian higher education was on the agenda, the aim of which was a rational integration of the fragmented institutional structure. The fusion between the Imre Haynal University of Health Sciences (HIETE), Semmelweis Medical University (SOTE) and the University of Physical Education (TF), took place on January 1, 2000. This new formation continues to operate under the name of Semmelweis University, which currently has six faculties, namely the Faculty of Medicine, the Faculty of Dentistry, the Faculty of Pharmacy, the Faculty of Health Sciences, the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport Sciences and the Faculty of Health- and Public Services.

As the greatest investments of the period, we should certainly mention the transplantation and surgical clinics which were commissioned in the early 1990s, the new

Dentistry Center, as well as the new Basic Medical Science Center on Túzoltó street, the latter two of which were both financed within this new system (PPP).