

"NEWBORNS ARE THE FUTURE - IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT EVERYONE UNDERSTANDS THE NEED FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF NEONATOLOGY IN ROMANIA"



Interview with: **Vlad DIMA, MD, PHD**
Consultant in Neonatology
Specialist in Pediatrics
Doctor of medicine

Member of medical scientific societies
National
Romanian Neonatology Association
Romanian Society of Pediatrics

Romanian Society of Preventive Medicine
Academic Society of Clinical Ultrasonography

International

ESPNIC - European Society of Pediatric and Neonatal Intensive Care

In the present

President of the Academic Society of Clinical Ultrasonography
Vice-president of the Romanian Society of Preventive Medicine
Member of the Director Board of the National Authority for Quality Management in Health

Activity in the editorial boards of medical journals

Romanian Medical Journal - Amaltea Publishing House - board member
Romanian Journal of Medical Practice - Amaltea Publishing House - board member
Romanian Journal of Infectious Diseases - Amaltea Publishing House - board member
Romanian Journal of Stomatology - Amaltea Publishing House - board member
Romanian Journal of Preventive Medicine – board member
Romanian Journal of Pharmaceutical Practice – Amaltea Publishing House – Associate Editor

Peer-reviewing activity

International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health MDPI
Antibiotics MDPI
Microbiology Research MDPI
Children MDPI
Brain Sciences MDPI
Nutrients MDPI
International Journal of Molecular Sciences MDPI
Pediatric Reports MDPI
Genes MDPI

Asian Journal of Case Reports in Surgery
International Research Journal of Gastroenterology and Hepatology
Clinical Medicine Insights: Pediatrics Sage Publications
Medicine MDPI
Global Public Health PLOS

National and international prizes

National prize for science and research - Romanian Journal of Medical Practice 2021
National prize for science and research - Romanian Medical Journal 2021
Excellence in Reviewing - Asian Journal of Pregnancy and Childbirth 2023
Excellence in Reviewing - Asian Journal of Case Reports in Surgery 2022, 2023
Excellence in Reviewing - Journal of Advances in Medicine and Medical Research 2023
Excellence in Reviewing - International Research Journal of Gastroenterology and Hepatology 2023.

Reporter: Dear doctor, you are the president and one of the founding members of the recently established Academic Society of Clinical Ultrasonography, which deals with a field of great interest in today's medicine, ultrasonography.

- *What can you tell us about the Academic Society of Clinical Ultrasound (ASCU)?*

VLAD DIMA: This society came into being at the beginning of 2023, bringing together a group of six doctors (founding members) who had the same desire: supporting and promoting ultrasonography as a diagnostic method in all specialties.

The most important is the fact that among the founding members is Mr. Prof. Dr. Adrian Costache, coordinator of the Ultrasonography Training Center of the "Carol Davila" University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Bucharest. Practically, he was the mentor of thousands of doctors who currently perform ultrasonography services in Romania. I think it thus becomes obvious that our society is one that aims to bring together high-class specialists under the same umbrella.

- *How has the medical society you founded evolved so far?*

VD: Of course, the beginning is the most difficult, but our society has managed to attract new members quickly. We are currently around 285 members – and let's not forget that the official launch happened relatively recently (June 30, 2023).

Very important for us is the fact that 43 academics have joined us, thus giving consistency to the idea of an academic society - currently, we have 12 university professors, 11 associate professors, 8 lecturers, and 12 university assistants enrolled. It is remarkable that in a short time, we managed to capture the attention and gain so many followers for our educational project.

- *What were the projects carried out by ASCU so far?*

VD: The first project of ASCU was of course one related to neonatology, as I am a neonatologist and pediatrician. The project was called "Focus on Mobile POCUS" and it was a project to equip 15 neonatology departments in Romania with handheld mobile wireless ultrasound devices. The value of the project was approximately 85,000 euros obtained through sponsorship from a market leader in the field of milk formulas for infants.

Why is this project important? Because it makes it possible to perform an ultrasonographic functional assessment at the patient's bedside in a short time (the concept of *point-of-care ultrasonography* – POCUS). If in other specialties this concept was implemented more quickly, in neonatology there was a gap - as a result, we set out to speed up the implementation of this concept in as many maternity hospitals as possible, using modern equipment – pocket-size ultrasound devices, we could call them.

Let's not forget that the ultrasound machine is expected to be the new stethoscope in medicine, so it would be slightly anachronistic to remain stuck on the idea of a sizeable ultrasound machine, weighing more than 10 kilograms, when we can benefit from technological progress and carry in our pocket, like a stethoscope, a portable ultrasound device.

The second project of the society, even if it is not one in the area of ultrasonography, is one that is based on the principle of our operation as a non-governmental organization, which, in addition to the educational part, aims to carry out charitable actions in the medical field. It is a project to equip a neonatology ward in a level III maternity hospital in Bucharest with modules for invasive measurement of blood pressure in newborns, a maternity hospital where I first got acquainted to the field of neonatology.

- *What continuing medical education events have you proposed for 2023?*

The first event we held to promote ultrasonography took place right at the time of ASCU's official launch. It was titled "Novelties about the use of diagnostic ultrasonography and point-of-care ultrasonography (POCUS)". It was an event organized in a physical format but could be viewed online.

The next event in which we are getting involved, this time alongside the Romanian Society of Pediatric Neurology, and for this I want to thank Mrs. Prof. Dr. Dana Craiu, is entitled "Fetal neurology course: From theory to practical applications in neurosonography". Speakers from Israel with extensive experience in the field of neurosonography will be invited to this event. This course will be extremely useful in the training of obstetricians who perform fetal

morphology during pregnancy and also for pediatric neurologists. Practically, this event is built around the idea of an interdisciplinary approach that is so useful to patients. Later, in the months of November and December, we will have other interdisciplinary continuing medical education events, even wanting to participate with family doctors at the "AREPMF Days" Conference. Mrs. Dr. Valeria Herdea is also a founding member of ASCU and supports us in all our endeavors. As a result, close cooperation was established between AREPMF, of which he is the president, and SAUC, which will bear fruit during the following years of activity of the two medical societies.

At the end of the year, we want to organize an event dedicated to gynecology and another event dedicated to pediatrics. In conclusion, the year 2023, the founding year of the society, will also be a prolific year in educational events.

R: Considering your involvement in the management of this medical society, your professional training, and the experience acquired, both in the medical field and in health management, we would like to obtain from you an approved opinion regarding the organization and operation of neonatology in Romania.

VD: In 2008, I started working as a resident doctor in neonatology. I remember even now the emotions with which I made contact with a premature baby for the first time. Fortunately, I was lucky to have good mentors in this field. Some of them are retired now, and others are still active in this branch, but all of them have contributed in one way or another to my training as a neonatologist and I can only thank them and keep them in my mind all the time when I hold in the palm of my hand a premature or full-term newborn.

I had the opportunity to lead a level III maternity hospital both as a medical director and as a manager, and later I had the opportunity to see things from the position of a member of the Board of Directors of the National Authority for Quality Management in Health.

What I can tell you for sure is that neonatology in Romania has advanced a lot and the results of high-standard care are increasingly visible. The gap with neonatal intensive care in Western European countries has narrowed significantly. Romanian doctors frequently had the opportunity to participate in medical events abroad and in the country, and the exchange of experience was intense.

An urgent need is the preparation of updated national guidelines at the level of 2023. They are being prepared, as far as I know, and I have participated in the revision of some guidelines, but they have not yet been published.

ASCU will come up with a concrete proposal of guidelines for performing POCUS in the newborn and we hope that by February 2024 they will be available.

Another acute need is to increase the number of neonatal intensive care beds in order to effectively reduce infant mortality. This is a global target, not just a national one. I think there is a need for the active involvement of the private sector in the financing of such projects because the national health system does not have the capacity to support the construction of a large number of specialized

medical units. Newborns are the future - it is essential that everyone understands the need for financial support for neonatology in Romania. Without neonatology properly educated and financed at the expected level, the future of Romania is a bleak one, with increased infant mortality and demographic decline impossible to stop.

- Do you think that participation in the creation and publication of scientific papers is necessary for doctors of the new generation?

VD: From my point of view, all young doctors who want to deepen certain fields should also deal with the research side, intensive study, publishing articles, and even specialty books. I realized this aspect when I started my activity as a doctoral student in the Doctoral School of the "Carol Davila" University of Medicine and Pharmacy. Once I became a doctor of medicine, I started publishing various articles, and studies in the medical field. I currently have about 150 papers published with other medical colleagues or as a sole author.

Of course, I consider the activity of peer-reviewing articles in international magazines to be equally important. I enjoy reading articles in the medical field and offering suggestions for improving them for publication - I have reached

about 60 reviews for 13 international journals.

Only in this way, by reading and sharing the accumulated experience, can we contribute to the improvement of the activity specific to the field in which we operate.

- What recommendations do you have for the next generation of doctors?

VD: They must have confidence in their ability to work – if you don't believe in yourself, no one will.

Of course, it is essential to read, learn as much medical knowledge as possible, and participate in as many practical activities as possible. Theory without practice is like the theory of forms without substance.

As in any field, in medicine, you may encounter people who are less prepared or less well-intentioned, but most of the experienced doctors will serve as a good example for them to follow.

Salaries in the medical field are currently decent and can ensure a living without worrying about tomorrow. As a result, I consider it unforgivable to fall prey to practices that do no honor to medical professionals. The focus of the new generations must be on the quality of the medical act and on the good interest of the patient.