



## FOREWORD

More than a year and a half into the new coronavirus pandemic and the response to it, a sense of despair has taken hold of Slovenian society over the prolonged situation that prevents us from returning to the life as we previously knew it, with part of the population failing to understand the virus that causes COVID-19 and calling science into question. The challenges facing us are rejection of protective measures and dismally low vaccination rates.

Conversely, the pandemic presents researchers with a unique opportunity to weigh previous research on the history of healthcare and epidemics in the light of their up-close, first-hand experience with the current health crisis. In other words, it provides an opportunity to generate an insight into how authorities and societies faced epidemics in the past by comparing measures, reactions to them, and post-epidemic life. New research findings can give us a better understanding of the present situation.

The review *Kronika* has regularly featured topics concerning the history of epidemics and healthcare. Special mention should be made of several prominent articles that discussed epidemics in historical context over the past decades. Already in the 1950s Majda Smole wrote about the plague in the sixteenth-century Carniola and Ema Umek about the plague in Styria between 1679 and 1683, in the 1960s Olga Janša-Zorn published an article on the

cholera epidemic in Carniola in 1855, and the 1970s saw the publication of Peter Vodopivec's article on the smallpox epidemic in Carniola and Ljubljana in 1873 and 1874.

This special issue of *Kronika* also aims to encourage the public to read and reflect on the history of epidemics and thus spread the knowledge to better cope with the ongoing pandemic. Collaboration with researchers who already addressed such topics in the past has delivered three new studies—two focusing on smallpox epidemics in the nineteenth-century Austrian Littoral and Carniola, and one investigating healing practices related to the plague epidemic in folklore. To further consolidate the knowledge by bringing it together in a single volume, the current issue of *Kronika* republishes three earlier articles on the topic at hand, that is, epidemics of contagious diseases in general as well as the epidemics of cholera and Spanish influenza, with each study discussing how authorities attempted to curb epidemics and how these were faced by the population. Motivated by the global relevance of the subject matter, we decided to publish the contributions fully translated to English and thus share our findings with international experts and everyone potentially interested.

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