

# ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

## Our dear Alumni,

By successfully completing your studies and entering into professional life, many things have changed for you. But one thing remains the same – the very essence of medicine. Perhaps this idea is best captured by the old Latin saying: “Medicina est ars, non scientia solum” – Medicine is not just a science, it’s an art.

It is precisely this balance between science and art that makes the medical profession so exceptional. Even though we live in an age of advanced technologies, artificial intelligence, and personalised medicine, everyday practice reminds us that professional knowledge and expertise gained during your studies alone are not enough.

Empathy, the ability to listen and understand, as well as medical intuition, are fundamental and irreplaceable tools of every healthcare professional. These are qualities we continue to develop throughout our lives, and thanks to them, your profession retains its unique character.

Through this newsletter, we aim not only to keep you informed about current events at the Faculty, but above all to maintain the connection between you – our alumni – and the Faculty that stood at the beginning of your professional journey. We also see in this form of communication an opportunity to strengthen our alumni community, which is a source of pride and inspiration for us.

We are genuinely interested in where the life has taken you since your graduating. Each and every one of you is living proof that the legacy of our alma mater continues beyond its walls, and we are incredibly proud of you all for carrying its good name into the world.

We look forward to staying in touch with you. Your active participation in the alumni community is a great inspiration for us and a valuable opportunity to develop together what unites us.

Warm regards,

Department of International Relations, Faculty of Medicine, Comenius University Bratislava (CU)



FACULTY OF MEDICINE  
Comenius University  
Bratislava

**Academic Year 2024/2025**



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## New International Students at the Faculty of Medicine, CU



In the academic year 2024/2025, we warmly welcomed a new group of international students - 228 in the General Medicine programme and 27 in the study programme Dentistry. Up to 75% of them come from Germany and Austria, but we were also joined by young people from Greece, Poland, Spain, Italy, Sweden, Ireland, France, Hungary and Bulgaria.

Medicine is a universal science. The students who pursue it come from diverse cultures and backgrounds, yet they are united by a common goal – to help others.

International students are an important part of our academic community. Their presence enriches teaching, fosters intercultural dialogue, and contributes to the development of competencies needed for work in global healthcare. We see their decision to study at our faculty as a sign of trust in the quality of our education and practical training.

The new academic year traditionally begins with our Freshers' Day event, where we introduce new students to the faculty environment, its values, and academic life. This year's program also included an interactive workshop focused on developing mental resilience – a topic that is essential in a doctor's life, although it often remains in the background.

Stress, fatigue, exhaustion, self-doubt, and burnout – these are all factors that can significantly affect the mental health of healthcare professionals. That's why we believe it is important to open these topics during medical studies, to strengthen self-awareness, and to create a safe space for discussion. Because we can only truly care for others if we remember to care for ourselves as well.

## Welcome Centre CU: Support for International Students and Academics



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Starting out in a new country brings with it many challenges – new environment, language barriers, administrative requirements, and cultural differences. These are common issues faced by international students and academics who are coming to study, work, or complete their internships at Comenius University.

To support their smooth adaptation and integration into our academic and social environment, Comenius University has established a specialized Welcome Centre CU, which offers comprehensive support not only before their arrival, but especially during the crucial first weeks of their stay in Slovakia.

The CU Welcome Center plays a key role in helping international students to become active and valuable members of the academic community at our faculty. The centre assists with visa applications, registration and residence permits, housing advice, health insurance, and transportation guidance.

In addition, it provides orientation support within the faculty, the city, and local institutions. It prepares informative materials in English, organizes personal consultations, information sessions, and workshops. Last but not least, it creates a friendly and supportive environment that helps international students feel welcome and safe here.

## The Wishing Tree – Small Notes with Great Meaning



Even small things can make a big change. At our faculty, we believe that mental health is just as important as physical health. That's why we strive to create an environment where everyone feels safe, accepted, understood, and supported. One of our symbolic, yet highly effective steps towards building a positive atmosphere at the faculty is the Wishing Tree.

This simple but powerful concept allows students, teachers, and staff to share their wishes, thoughts, and words of encouragement with others. It serves as a gentle reminder that we are not alone in difficult moments – that our hopes, fears, and dreams are valid, and that together, we form a community that stands by one another.

The Wishing Tree is not only a way of expressing and sharing, but also a quiet tool for nurturing mental well-being. These small messages, full of humanity and empathy, hold incredible power – often doing more than we realize by reminding us that every single one of us matters.

## International Experts at Our Faculty: A Gateway to the World of Modern Medicine



Lectures given by international experts offer students of the Faculty of Medicine CU a unique opportunity to expand their knowledge beyond standard study materials. These events also play a vital role in connecting the faculty with the international scientific community, thus fostering the development of the academic environment.

We had the honor of welcoming Dr. Jorge Salinas, an infectious disease specialist and hospital epidemiologist from Stanford University (USA), who introduced us to innovative methods of infection monitoring using artificial intelligence and wastewater surveillance – a topic of great relevance in today's world.

We were also privileged to host Professor Mitsuo Ochi from Hiroshima University, a renowned orthopedics expert, who shared with students and professionals his 30 years of experience in knee joint preservation. These international lectures not only broaden knowledge, but also serve as a source of inspiration for future doctors and researchers on their journey towards knowledge and professional growth.



## **The Faculty of Medicine of Comenius University Bratislava is successfully participating in various initiatives in the European alliance ENLIGHT: New opportunities for students in a multicultural environment**



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Comenius University Bratislava has been a proud member of the prestigious European university alliance ENLIGHT since 2020. This strategic collaboration brings together 10 leading European universities with the goal of strengthening the exchange of academic experience, fostering research cooperation, and promoting sustainable development in education and society.

By joining the ENLIGHT network, our faculty has gained new opportunities for international student and staff mobility, knowledge exchange, and joint projects aimed at improving the quality of education and research, as well as implementing innovative educational programs based on an interdisciplinary approach.

ENLIGHT places a strong emphasis on interdisciplinarity and societal engagement—values that align closely with the mission and vision of our faculty. It also offers a unique opportunity to actively contribute to shaping the European academic space while advancing our commitment to the development of modern medicine and healthcare. We firmly believe that participation in the ENLIGHT network will significantly contribute to the further growth of our faculty and enhance its international reputation.

For our students and academic staff, ENLIGHT represents a unique opportunity to take part in international mobility programmes, exchange stays, and joint academic projects with peers from leading European universities. This collaboration also provides and access to innovative teaching methods and interdisciplinary courses that enrich the curriculum and prepare graduates for careers in international healthcare settings, while also offering the chance to connect with top experts from across Europe.

## New Simulation Centre at the Faculty of Medicine, CU – A Place Where Skills turn into confidence



Modern medicine today demands not only theoretical knowledge but also the precise proficiency of practical skills. That is why the Faculty of Medicine, Comenius University Bratislava has opened a new Simulation Centre, offering students a safe and professional environment to practice clinical scenarios, medical procedures, and patient communication – all before entering a real hospital setting.

The new facility features state-of-the-art classrooms, high-fidelity simulators, anatomical models, 3D printers, and acute care training stations. Under the supervision of experienced instructors, students can rehearse life-threatening situations they are likely to encounter in outpatient clinics, emergency departments, or operating rooms. The Simulation Centre thus provides a space where theoretical knowledge is effectively integrated with hands-on experience, leading to greater confidence and professional competence among graduates.

The primary aim of the Simulation Centre is to enhance the self-confidence, expertise, and readiness of future doctors. Students gain practical clinical skills, develop patient communication abilities, and improve teamwork in a highly realistic setting – all without putting real patients at risk.

The establishment of the Simulation Centre reflects the faculty's strategic commitment to improving practical training and aligns with current trends in the education of future healthcare professionals. It meets the highest international standards and enhances the attractiveness of the faculty to international students and partners as part of its ongoing internationalization efforts.

## New Professors as a Boost to the Quality of Education and Research at the Faculty of Medicine, Comenius University Bratislava

The appointment of new professors represents a significant qualitative contribution to our faculty. These are respected experts with long-standing clinical, scientific, and teaching experience who enrich our academic community through their authority, professional background, and expertise.

We are pleased to introduce our newly appointed professors:



**Professor Boris Šteňo,**

Head of the 2nd Department of Orthopaedics and Traumatology,  
FM CU and UNB



**Professor Katarína Babinská,**

Institute of Physiology,  
FM CU



**Professor Miroslav Tedla,**

Head of the Department of Otorhinolaryngology,  
Head and Neck Surgery,  
FM CU and UNB

Our newly appointed professors are not only key figures in advancing science and education, but also guarantors of academic excellence and high standards in both teaching and research. Their contribution plays a vital role in fulfilling the mission of our faculty – to educate qualified, confident, and competent professionals ready to meet the demands of medical practice.

## Medical International Day



Our faculty successfully hosted an International Day event, dedicated to cultural exchange and the promotion of understanding, cooperation and friendship among all students. The program included a diverse range of educational activities, such as lecture on AMBOSS, artificial intelligence and its application in medicine or everyday life, as well as the integration of research with clinical practice.

Participants also took part in a workshop focused on mental health, as well as practical demonstrations from various medical disciplines. They had the opportunity to practice laparoscopic techniques, sonography, basic nursing procedures, first aid, and patient's care.

We believe that this is the beginning of a new tradition and that Medical International Day, which brings together Slovak and international students from all over the world, will become an annual event at the Faculty of Medicine.



## They Studied with Us, They Are Successful Abroad



### Comenius University Faculty of Medicine Celebrates Global Success of Alumna Professor Barbora de Courten

Comenius University Bratislava, Faculty of Medicine takes great pride in its graduates who carry the faculty's reputation for excellence across Slovakia and around the world. Our alumni hold prominent positions in leading medical and academic institutions globally, where they make vital contributions to clinical practice, medical research, and the advancement of healthcare. Their achievements - from groundbreaking publications to international leadership and prestigious awards - reflect the world-class education they received at our institution.

One such distinguished alumna is Distinguished Professor Barbora (Vozarova) de Courten OAM, a globally respected physician-scientist in the fields of internal medicine and diabetes. After completing both her medical degree and PhD in Epidemiology at the Faculty of Medicine at Comenius University, Professor de Courten has built an internationally acclaimed career at the intersection of clinical research, public health, and healthcare leadership.

Now based in Australia, Professor de Courten holds senior academic and clinical appointments at **RMIT University, Monash University**, and the **University of Queensland and Monash Health**. Her research focuses on the prevention and management of chronic diseases, particularly obesity and type 2 diabetes. She is known for her pioneering work establishing the link between inflammation, insulin resistance, and metabolic disease, and for identifying interventions that can reduce inflammation and prevent the onset of chronic illnesses.

Professor de Courten brings deep expertise across the translational research continuum- from human mechanistic studies and clinical trials to public health interventions and real-world implementation. She also holds a **Master of Public Health** and completed advanced training in **clinical trials at the National Institutes of Health (NIH)** in the United States. In addition, she is a **business-focused Executive MBA** graduate, applying strategic, commercial, and leadership principles to bridge the gap between scientific discovery and healthcare impact.

Her outstanding contributions have been widely recognised. In **2024**, she was awarded the **Order of Australia Medal (OAM)** by the Governor-General of Australia for her significant service to healthcare and medical research. That same year, she was also awarded an **Honorary Fellowship by the Australasian Society of Lifestyle Medicine** - the highest honour of the Society - in recognition of her leadership and impact in the field.

Professor de Courten's remarkable achievements exemplify the calibre of education provided by the Faculty of Medicine, Comenius University Bratislava. Her success is a powerful testament to how our graduates contribute to advancing global health, scientific knowledge, and evidence-based care on the world stage.

## Graduation Ceremony 2025 - From Students to Doctors



On the first Monday of July 2025, the Comenius University Auditorium hosted the graduation ceremony for the newest alumni of the Faculty of Medicine, Comenius University Bratislava. The event celebrated the graduates of General Medicine and Dentistry from the English-language programmes.

During the opening fanfare, the graduates of class 2025 proudly entered the hall wearing black robes and hats. After the Slovak national anthem, Vice-Rector of Comenius University Bratislava Professor Viera Štvrtinová and Dean of the Faculty of Medicine Comenius University Bratislava Professor Juraj Payer addressed the graduates expressing their appreciation and encouragement, emphasizing professionalism, ethics, and lifelong learning.

The highlight of the ceremony was the oath-taking. Diplomas were presented by **Dean of the Faculty of Medicine Comenius University Bratislava Professor Juraj Payer** individually, officially confirming each graduate's transition to the medical profession. The speeches by the Vice-Rector and Dean were followed by touching speeches by students, who expressed their gratitude to their teachers, families, and friends.

The ceremony concluded with applause, photographs, and joyful moments shared by all. The Faculty of Medicine proudly sends **160 new doctors of General Medicine** and **15 new doctors of Dental Medicine** into the world. We wish them every success and fulfilment as they begin their careers in medicine and dentistry.



**We hope to stay in touch with you!**

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