



40 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN APITHERAPY – THE INSTITUTE FOR APICULTURAL RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

Dr.bioch.Cristina Mateescu

General Manager

Romanian Institute for Beekeeping Research & Development

42 Ficusului Blv., 013975 Bucharest 1, Romania,

Vice-president of APIMONDIA Standing Commission of Apitherapy

Abstract

The Institute for Beekeeping Research & Development (IBRD) belonging to the Romanian Beekeepers' Association, is the only research unit involved in apicultural research. The Romanian Beekeepers' Association (RBA) is an organization of beekeepers which succeeded to find its way as a private unit in spite the "red political period". All this, was possible due to the enthusiasm and professionalism of the beekeepers and also of their leader prof.dr.eng. Veceslav Harnaj, President of Apimondia for more than 20 years (1965-1988).

In 1970 the large world organization of the beekeepers – APIMONDIA (The International Federation of Beekeepers' Associations) created in Bucharest an institution known as the International Institute for Technology and Economy (I.I.T.E.A.) – which was deeply involved in the activity of the federation and the editorial work.

It was at the initiative of prof.dr.eng.Veceslav Harnaj that the first *Medical Sector of Apitherapy* was founded. This sector functioned as a private clinical dispensary with all the medical specialties in which the medical services were offered by known medical doctors who pioneered the application of a new medical branch – the complex therapy with honeybee products. This activity was based on a close collaboration with the research structures working in the research station of apiculture and sericulture, as the IBRD was not yet created.

Once that IBRD was founded (1974) and the research structures implemented, in 1977, the Medical Sector of Apitherapy from the I.I.T.E.A. entered under the authority of the institute, to be organized as both a medical research department and a medical centre.

At the level of the *Institute for Beekeeping Research & Development (IBRD)*, apitherapy was gradually defined as a new medical branch due to the enthusiastic activity of the Research & Development department were pharmacists, biochemists, biologists and a bit later, medical doctors working together developed a whole series of pharmaceutical products as well as nutritional supplements. More than 40 formulations of pharmaceutical preparations (formulations) with specific medicinal applications were created, but what is really worth mentioning is the great effort to convince the pharmaceutical and medical authorities that bee products contain highly active biological and pharmacological compounds that proved to be efficient for various ailments of the human body. Years of complex studies on the biochemistry and pharmacology of propolis, bee collected pollen, bee bread, bee venom (apitoxin), royal jelly and the drone brood triturate – known under the name of Apilarnil (after the name of Nicolae Iliesiu, a beekeeper that pioneered part of the work in apitherapy) etc., and the longitudinal medical studies carried out in the specialized departments of the Medical Centre could finally convince the Medicine Commission of the Ministry of Health, that these natural products, especially propolis could represent a new natural pharmacological active raw material.

Within APIMONDIA the Independent Working Group on Apitherapy (Farm. Elena Palos 1979) finally became the Standing Commission of Apitherapy carried and carries out important projects as: Honey and infant botulism and Apimondia certification for apitherapy promoting companies and their products and also apitherapy as an aid in disaster affected regions.

The new place of natural medicines, the role of the nutritional supplements, the clinical studies meant to prove the nutritional and health claims associated to bee products according to the EC Regulation 1924/2006, complying with the new production regulations (GMP, HACCP) or other quality management systems are new directions in the development of scientific and technologic research in this field.

Apitherapy could thus find its important role within nutritional medicine but mainly due to its complementarity and uniqueness, in specific treatments of integrative medicine, which might approach the modern civilization diseases with increased incidence: cancer, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, allergies, viral diseases, auto-immune diseases etc.