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In Memoriam of Prof. Dr. Anton Zupan

It was on that gloomy, rainy Tuesday morning when a colleague delivered the infinitely sad news to me. At first, you hope it's a mistake, but the seriousness of the morning gradually presses you into a day that confronts you with the truth.

That day, a great Man, whom we friends called "Dr. Tone," departed.

Prof. Dr. Anton Zupan was a distinguished expert in a specialized field of medicine. He was a physiatrist - a physician specializing in physical and rehabilitation medicine. His profound knowledge of his field was intertwined with his personal battle with illness. Every day, he faced a rare progressive genetic disease that persistently deteriorated muscle function. He was always acutely aware of his path, which is why he constantly intertwined his life experiences with science. In this way, he continually sought a path forward, towards development. He always managed to create a scientific whirlwind that drew in and eventually pulled in the rest of us. At the centre of this whirlwind was always a very special atmosphere. When we gathered around the table and discussed various ideas, it was always extremely creative, clear, precise, and realistic. Despite the whirlwind of possibilities constantly striking our thoughts, Prof. Dr. Zupan knew how to find the right way out.

The esteemed professor was employed at the University Rehabilitation Institute of the Republic of Slovenia - Soča, where he honed his knowledge and directly shared it with his colleagues and his patients. He was a specialist physician, and his scientific hobby was engineering technology. His eyes lit up when we discovered even the smallest idea that could ease the lives of those with dystrophy, his spirit entered a magical world when he personally tested the idea, and his pride soared as high as Triglav when the idea came to life among his protégés. Prof. Dr. Zupan was extremely precise, possessed a refined sense of the melodiousness of language, had an impeccable memory, and always respected inventions and innovations intertwined with modern technology, whose power he was very much aware of. He was technically curious and medically complex, carefully storing every detail in his "central memory."

Prof. Dr. Tone Zupan collaborated with many research institutions at home and abroad. Among these institutions was the University of Maribor, with the Centre for Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Research and Studies (CIMRŠ), within which the Institute for the Development of Technologies for the Disabled (IRTIUM) operated from 2002 to 2005. Many Slovenian experts from various fields, including from University of Maribor, Faculty of Organizational Sciences (UM FOV), joined this institute. Prof. Zupan immensely enjoyed his interactions within IRTIUM, where ideas about dynamic seating in wheelchairs, a bed for turning the disabled during sleep, self-service automatic refuelling at gas stations, driving aids, special requirements for "winter crutches," smart homes, and the employment of people with disabilities were nurtured. Through collaboration with the Cybernetics and Decision Support Systems Laboratory at UM FOV, one of these ideas materialized into a voice-controlled wheelchair. The list of ideas, conceived and realized projects, is long, so long that life becomes too short. Therefore, dear colleagues, acquaintances, and other readers who have captured your precious time within these lines created by the life of a great friend and scientist, we invite you to follow some idea or scientific thought. In this way, colleague Tone will continue to create.

In his lifetime, Dr. Anton Zupan did much good for patients, students, the community, and science. He has etched himself into our hearts. He proved that we could move the world for the better. We colleagues will now often sigh and say: "Tone, forgive us, but once again, we ask you for an answer to this question..."

And Tone, thank you for your wise thoughts.

Zvone Balantič, Andrej Koložvari, Lado Lenart, Andrej Škraba

