

Short communication

JOSEPH JOHANN MAŠTALÍŘ (MASTALIERZ) (1757–1793): A PIONEER OF EUROPEAN OUTPATIENT CARE FOR SICK CHILDREN

Jan Janda ^{1, 2}

¹ University Hospital Motol, Second Faculty of Medicine, Department of Paediatrics, Prague, Czech Republic

² University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, Faculty of Health and Social Sciences, České Budějovice, Czech Republic

INTRODUCTION

Joseph Johann Maštalíř (also spelled Mastalierz), a native of South Bohemia and a physician for infants and children (today we would say pediatrician), stood at the cradle of European outpatient medical care for sick children from poor families.

Maštalíř was born on March 17, 1757, in Veselí nad Lužnicí, as the son of František Maštalíř and his wife Barbora. To briefly outline the historical background of Bohemia during his lifetime, it is sufficient to mention the well-known Battle of Kolín on June 18, 1757, during the reign of Empress Maria Theresa (1740–1780), when the Austrian army defeated the Prussian forces. Maštalíř was also a contemporary of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (born January 27, 1756; died December 5, 1791).

Maštalíř's father, František, was a successful tradesman and baker and also served as a member of the local municipal government in Veselí nad Lužnicí. It can therefore be assumed that he placed considerable importance on the education of his children. The region had a significant German-speaking minority, which suggests that the family was bilingual and that both Czech and German were spoken at home. This could explain Joseph's later education in Jindřichův Hradec (in German Neuhaus), where the highly educated people were fluent in German. Maštalíř attended the Jesuit grammar school in Jindřichův Hradec, located only 30 km from Veselí nad Lužnicí. That gymnasium was founded as early as 1594. The primary language of instruction was Latin, and the Jesuits placed great emphasis

on this – perfect mastery of Latin was the main study goal.

Such an education allowed students to continue to university, often starting at the Faculty of Philosophy, where Maštalíř studied before matriculating at the Prague Faculty of Medicine.

What is firmly documented is that, according to the records of Prague's Charles–Ferdinand University, Joseph Mastalierz was matriculated at the Faculty of Medicine on January 15, 1777, in Prague, at the age of twenty, under the Latin entry *Josephus Mastalierz, Bohemus, Wesselicensis* (Fig. 1). Maštalíř's early departure from Prague to study at the Faculty of Medicine in Vienna after his matriculation in Prague was probably due to the university in the imperial capital maintaining a higher academic standard than those in other parts of the Empire.

Maštalíř completed his studies in Vienna and graduated in 1784 as Doctor of Medicine, with his dissertation titled *De morbis vasorum lymphaticorum* (Mastalierz, 1784a). While Maštalíř was preparing his dissertation on lymphatic diseases, he was also preparing a separate work on bee diseases for publication – “Abhandlung von den Bienenkrankheiten” (Mastalierz, 1784b). He was among the very first to apply his medical education, scientific methodology, and skills to the study of bees, including their anatomy and dissection (Gicklhorn, 1960).

A decisive milestone in Maštalíř's career was the year 1787, when he founded an institute in Vienna that functioned as an outpatient facility for sick children from poor families. It later became known in German as

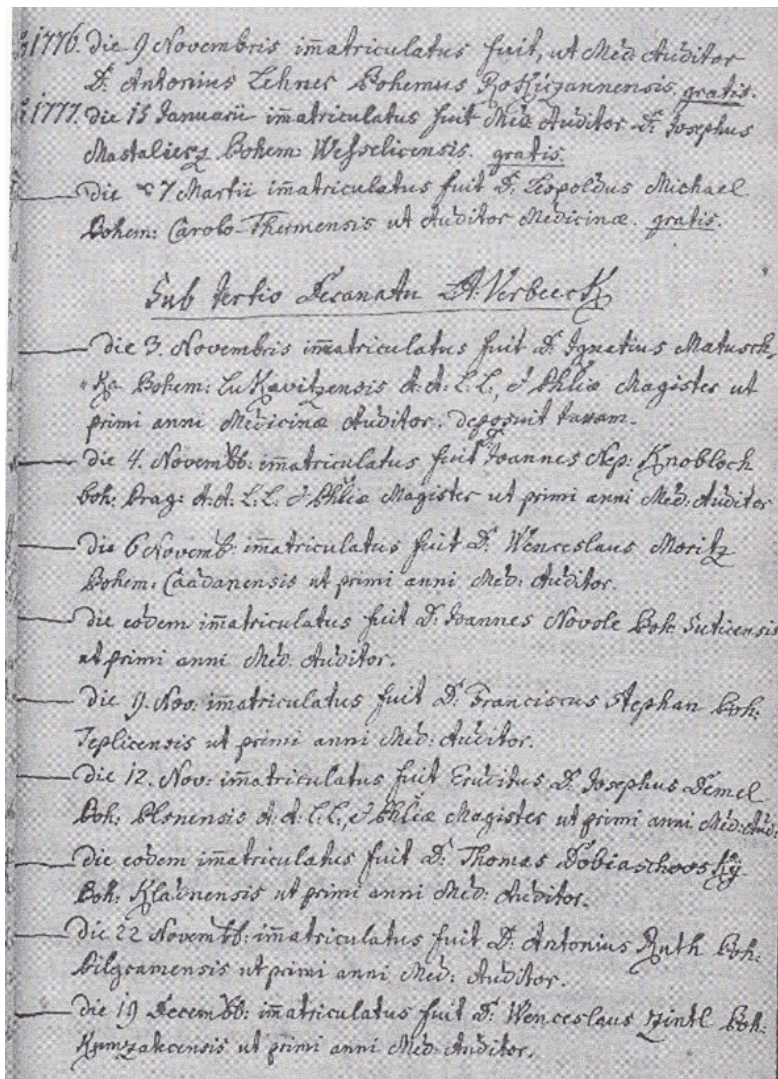


Fig. 1 – Matriculation record

the “Erstes öffentliches Kinderkranken-Institut” (First Public Institute for Sick Children). Remarkably, this institution operated continuously until 1938, a total of 151 years (Srovátka, 1991). Here it is also necessary to mention a facility founded by Dr. George Armstrong (1719–1789), a Scottish physician, who established the first outpatient dispensary for sick children in 1767 in London. However, this dispensary was only in operation for two years (Bokay, 1922). In that sense, Maštalíř’s Institute was the first in continental Europe, but

what is more, the Vienna Institute continued to operate until 1938. During the period of operation of Maštalíř’s Institute, there were still no inpatient facilities (i.e., hospitals for children) worldwide. The oldest inpatient facility for children was the first children’s hospital in the world (L’Hôpital Des Enfants-Malades), only opened in Paris in 1802. The famous London hospital for sick children, Great Ormond Street Hospital, only opened on February 14, 1852 (Peiper, 1955).

From 1787 onward, Mašťalíř treated children primarily at his residence, which served as the Institute, but he also visited sick children in their homes when necessary. From a modern perspective, his activities can be described as an early form of social pediatrics.

The usefulness of the Institute was widely recognized and supported by donations. On the recommendation of his personal physician (Joseph von Quarin), Emperor Joseph II granted Mašťalíř an annual subsidy of 100 ducats. Mašťalíř also edited and published a book entitled “Über die beste und leichteste Art, der zarten Säuglinge zu ernähren” (Mastalierz, 1787). The proceeds from its sale were used to support the activities of his Institute.

Nevertheless, Mašťalíř understood that the long-term success of the Institute required official public status and regular state funding. Therefore, in 1792 he submitted a comprehensive petition to the Emperor requesting him to grant public rights and stable financial support. In the introduction to his petition, Mašťalíř emphasized that orphans and sick children of poor parents – especially infants – often did not receive timely and appropriate medical care. As a result, particularly in large cities, many children died at an early age, while others survived with severe disabilities requiring lifelong and costly care. He argued that this situation represented not only a humanitarian and ethical problem but also a significant financial burden on the state treasury.

Mašťalíř informed the Emperor that, at the time of submitting the petition, his Institute was already treating sick children free of charge, providing medications and instructing parents on proper childcare. Detailed records were kept for all patients – what we would today call medical records. By that time, 6,170 children had already been treated. He further emphasized that concentrating the care of sick children in a single, well-functioning institution allowed for a deeper understanding of childhood diseases and improved medical skills. He explicitly noted that

children differ fundamentally from adults in their development and therefore require specialized medical care. From a modern perspective, Mašťalíř’s ideas appear remarkably advanced – indeed, visionary – for their time. As head of the Institute, he combined medical expertise with effective organizational and administrative skills; today, he would undoubtedly be described as a capable healthcare manager (Fig. 2).

Mašťalíř did not live to see the granting of public status and stable state funding for his Institute. He died prematurely at the age of 36 on November 8, 1793, from pneumonia contracted in the course of his medical work. At that time, photography and daguerreotypes did not yet exist, making the likelihood of a surviving portrait extremely low.

After Mašťalíř’s death, the Institute continued to operate, largely according to the principles he had established. His successors included Dr. L. L. Gölis, followed by Dr. C. Löbisch, later appointed extraordinary professor of women’s and children’s diseases, as well as Dr. Max Politzer and Dr. Max Kasowitz. Notably, Sigmund Freud also served for a time as a consultant at the Institute and published observations based on his examinations and treatment of children there.

Mašťalíř was highly respected both during his lifetime and posthumously by prominent European pediatricians, including Professor János Bókay of Budapest, who regarded him as an exceptionally esteemed figure throughout the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

The Institute founded by Mašťalíř continued its activities until 1938. Following the “Anschluss”, the incorporation of Austria into the German Reich, the Nuremberg Racial Laws were introduced in Austria. As many of the Institute’s employees were of Jewish origin, its dissolution at that time was carried out with tragic ease.

An interesting historical parallel is that Mašťalíř lived during the same period as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Both died prematurely and Mašťalíř even outlived Mozart by two years. The burial place of both is unknown.



1. Internal Medicine Clinic, 2. Lecture room, 3. Surgical room, 4. Operating theater, 5. Laboratory

Fig. 2 – The first public pediatric outpatient institute in Vienna – the interior layout of the institute's rooms (during the time of Mastalierz and later his successor Max Kassowitz)

REFERENCES

1. Bokay J (1922). Die Geschichte der Kinderheilkunde. Springer Verlag, 132 p.
2. Gicklhorn R (1960). Joseph Johann Mastalierz: An der Wiege der Kinderheilkunde. Neue österreichische Zeitschrift für Kinderheilkunde 1: 1–5.
3. Mastalierz JJ (1784a). De morbis vasorum lymphaticorum [On the Diseases of the Lymphatic Vessels]. Doctor's dissertation. Vienna.
4. Mastalierz JJ (1784b). Abhandlung von den Bienenkrankheiten [A Treatise on the Diseases of Bees]. Printed by Kurzbeek in Vienna.
5. Mastalierz JJ (1787). Über die beste und leichteste Art die zarten Säuglinge zu ernähren [On the Best and Easiest Way to Feed Delicate Infants]. Vienna. Personal private print.
6. Peiper A (1955). Chronik der Kinderheilkunde. Leipzig: VEB Georg Thieme Verlag, 427 p.
7. Syrovátka A (1991). Český lékař u kolébky dětského lékařství. Csl Pediat 46: 246–247.

* **Corresponding author:** Jan Janda, University Hospital Motol, Second Faculty of Medicine, Department of Paediatrics, Prague, Czech Republic; e-mail: jandajan1@seznam.cz
<http://doi.org/10.32725/jnss.2026.008>

Submitted: 2026-03-30 • Accepted: 2026-05-04 • Prepublished online: 2026-05-11

J Nurs Soc Stud Public Health Rehabil 17/1–2: 111–114 • EISSN 1804-7181 • ISSN 1804-1868

© 2026 The Authors. Published by University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, Faculty of Health and Social Sciences, Czech Republic and International Society of Applied Preventive Medicine, Vienna, Austria
 This is an open access article under the CC BY 4.0 license.