



Marko Polo's Diary

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The problems as well as various explanatory programs in the field of health transition are not of a new concern. Since the 1980s, these topics have been marked and addressed by various publications and related events at international level. Among these activities, the Health Care Systems in Transition (HiT) profiles were also executed as country-based reports that provide an analytical description of each health care system and of reform initiatives in progress or under development led by the European Observatory on Health Care Systems. The Observatory is a unique undertaking that brings together the WHO Regional Office for Europe, the governments of Norway and Spain, the European Investment Bank, the World Bank, the London School of Economics and Political Science, and the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. This partnership supports and promotes evidence-based health policy-making through comprehensive and rigorous analysis of the dynamics of health care systems in Europe.

In Croatia, the latest event which addressed the issue of health care system in transition was one organized by the Bioethics Committee of the Croatian Medical Association (CMA) (most of the organizing activities were taken by Head Doctor Goran Ivanišević and Professor Ivan Bakran). It took part in Zagreb at CMA premises in Šubićevo 9. Although one could hardly think of a more challenging and important issue relevant for the development of Croatian health care system, not many participants attended at the event. However, thanks to the fact that the main organizers took

care in editing the proceedings material which was already at disposal to the participants, there is some hope that the issues presented and discussed at the event are not lost forever.* At the beginning of the Symposium, some of the lecturers reviewed the fields of health behavior with a conclusion that within the transition health care system, ethics is needed more than ever before. Professor Anica Jušić pinpointed the importance of communication network. Only community, in which communication is realized in favor of the benefit of the biggest part of the population, can progress. Therefore, according to Professor Jušić, we are responsible for the quality of this communication, irrespective of legislation. In emphatic communication the emotions and attitudes not formulated in words can be recognized; the prognosis can be defined, even that of the end of life. Human mental health as an indicator of functioning of the entire society was addressed by Professors Dubravka Kocijan-Hercigonja and Vlado Jukić. Zora Zakanj, MD and Josip Grgurić, MD warned that last year, WHO in its new European Strategy for Child and Adolescent Health and Development defined seven priorities in child and adolescent health problems. In the future it is necessary to develop a model of child health care, which will be holistic in its approach to children, especially in the sense of preventive measures, but also with stronger links with other sectors involved in the care of children. Professional and political opinion about the official proposals of the national health system reform were expressed by the representatives of

Zagreb Municipality, while the right to strike was elaborated by Ivica Babić, MD, a representative of the Croatian Medical Union, by Professor Božidar Vrhovac and Mirjana Nasić, MD. The latter pointed out that a potential threat to the population health and life during a strike is essentially reduced if quality standards are routinely used. At the end, the Codices of Medical Ethics and Deontology regarding recent changes were elaborated by Head Doctor Goran Ivanišević.

Despite the importance of the Symposium, the interest of Croatian practitioners was minimal. The concluding remarks at the end of the event showed a particularly discouraging attitude of those who did come. The Croatian health care system seems to need a considerate program, true and comprehensive engagement of all as well as productive communication. The lack of consensus among

physicians, politicians, and the public about the major issues on the nation's health agenda will certainly deteriorate any progress by pulling it in the great many different directions, to growing dissatisfaction of all.

Unquestionably, this subject will have long way to run before it acquires some progress. The described Symposium represented only one step in a long journey.

The world is waiting, sretan vam put!

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* The Proceedings of the Symposium is available at CMA, Šubićeva 9, Zagreb.



Illustration from "Svijet" magazine; year 1935.
(from the collection of Mr. Zlatko Puntijar)