

THE PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION OF BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA - DISTINCTIVE ROLE IN NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK

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SUMMARY

Background: Following the initiative and after preparation that lasted about a year it has been formed national association of experts dealing with psychiatry in our country named Psychiatric Association of Bosnia-Herzegovina (PABH). On March 17th 2008 PABH was formally started with its work that would be since 2009 been actively promoted and profiling as one of the best organized professional associations in B-H. Recognition on the international level and the active role of the PABH substantially achieved in 2010 in the World (WPA), and from 2011 in European (EPA) Psychiatric Association. The Third Congress of Psychiatrists of B-H with International participation is the first in a series of future Congresses organized by PABH.

Methods: A retrospective review of the development and significance of the PABH both nationally and internationally through the documentation and archives of the PABH.

Results: The PABH is included in major psychiatric events in the country (active participation in the organization, logistics and scientific programme) and experts from our country are involved in an increasing number of international professional bodies.

Conclusions: The PABH is the leading psychiatric association B-H, an active member of the largest and most important international organizations, with a continuous increase of the number of members who recognize the importance, relevance and quality of the PABH and further progress in its development and tendencies to harmonize psychiatric practice in the country and internationally.

Key words: psychiatry – PABH - development

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INTRODUCTION

Psychiatry in the former Yugoslavia has its origins since the late 19th century, about 120 years ago. The first psychiatric practices in Bosnia and Herzegovina (B-H) were carried out more than 100 years. The increasing number of neuro-psychiatrists in whole Yugoslavia, as well as already established associating of the specialists from various medical fields, encouraged the creation of specialized associations, including psychiatric, especially after World War II, when in former Yugoslavia was founded the Psychiatric Association of Yugoslavia, which has actively contributed to the development of psychiatric practice across the country. Certainly, the psychiatrists from B-H were a part of that large community.

After the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there were several associations/societies that are gathered psychiatrists: the Psychiatric Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Psychiatric Association of Republic of Srpska, the Psychiatric Association of the Tuzla Canton, the Association of Biological Psychiatry/Psychopharmacology in B-H Federation and others. On their ways they try to influence through specific initiatives to modernize and improve the quality of psychiatric services in the geographic framework of its activities. However, the discrepancy in joint appearances or lack of their wider activities demanded some changes.

After the initiative and following the preparations that lasted for about one year in B-H was formed national association of professionals engaged in psychiatry,

named the Psychiatric Association Psychiatric of Bosnia-Herzegovina (PABH). Major role in this activities have played the prominent experts from the whole country: Academician Prof. Slobodan Loga, Prof. Ismet Cerić, Prof. Abdulah Kučukalić, Prof. Marija Burgić-Radmanović, Prof. Izet Pajević, Assoc. Prof. Dragan Babić, Dr. Nermana Mehić-Basara, Dr. Joka Simić-Blagovčanin, Dr. Alma Džubur Kulenović. The Constituent Assembly of the PABH was held in Sarajevo, at the end of the 2nd Congress of Psychiatrists of B-H with International participation, on October 20th, 2007, which was attended over 100 psychiatrists from B-H, when the first President of the Association become Prof. Marija-Burgić Radmanović from Banja Luka and the Prof. Ismet Cerić from Sarajevo was elected as the President of the PABH General Assembly.

Since March 17th 2008 the PABH is legally registered by the competent Ministry and began with its activities. In this overview I will introduce a turn in the operational and organizational aspects of our association in a qualitative meaning for five-year period (2007-2012), that profiling PABH in one of the best organized professional medical associations in B-H, internationally recognizable.

STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

The PABH is a voluntary, non-profit professional association of physicians involved in psychiatry (psychiatrists and neuro-psychiatrists, early careers and

psychiatry trainees and medical doctors-GPs who are employed in mental health institutions) in B-H, with the primary aim of popularization of psychiatric practice through improving the work of the psychiatrists (Statut 2007, Dopunjeni i izmijenjeni Statut 2010). It is an association of all its members from beginning, offering them additional benefits through regular, prompt, complete and various professional awareness, and support the expansion of professional knowledge.

At the leading authorities of the PABH were elected colleagues from all over B-H and the various mental health institutions in our country and every member of the association is a member of the PABH General Assembly (Zakon o zdravstvenoj zaštiti 1997). Thus, everyone is able to be elected in the Association's Leadership and to elect directly representatives of the PABH to represent him/her at home and abroad/internationally, as a part of the principle of equality of all PABH members.

Our Association adopted and follows the national and international ethical standards (Codes of Ethics in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Madrid Declaration, Declaration of Hawaii and the Helsinki Declaration).

ACTIVITIES

The main activities in first five years of PABH have focused into five directions: promotion of the Association and membership in the PABH, professional meetings in B-H, PABH role in the World Psychiatric Association (WPA), co-operation with other psychiatric associations/societies, and informing the members and the general public.

One of the fundamental principles of the PABH was a gathering of professionals in the field of psychiatry in whole B-H to one professional association, and, on a solid foundation, was began with that activities after meeting of the Association's broader Leadership in late 2008 year. The increase of the number of members the PABH was significant during each following year (from 46 in 2009 to 157 by mid-2012), thus the Association brought together nearly half of all psychiatrists and neuro-psychiatrists in B-H, in the currently largest psychiatric association in the country. This has contributed to the persistence in promoting of the PABH from year to year, and in that certainly a huge part has every PABH Member. To each member, in addition to public access to documents relevant to the work of the Association (Statute, Rules and Regulations) all of these documents are sent as a part of the established complete and continuous informing about their roles in the Association. The PABH now gathers Bosnia-Herzegovinian most eminent experts, Professors of psychiatry on all Medical Schools, Heads of University Departments of Psychiatry, Heads of all hospital departments and almost all Community mental health centers in the country, but also the most of the young colleagues (residents and young psychiatrists), thus opening up

possibilities and for their future professional promotion in domestic and international context.

Among the first benefits for the PABH members was decision of the PABH Leadership on the establishment of continuing maintenance of the Annual Symposium of psychiatrists in B-H, named Psychiatric Days, which took place in Banja Luka (2009), Vrucica Spa (2010) and Tuzla (2011), dealing with current topics in psychiatry and views of the latest results of researches in the country and actual guidelines and recommendations for the treatment of common psychiatric disorders (bipolar affective disorder, depression, psychosis). Specific feature of these two-day Symposia, which were completely organized by the PABH, is that members had free registration fee for participation in those conferences. All previously held Psychiatric Days have excellent attendance and became a traditional professional gathering organized by the PABH.

On the other hand, the PABH took active part in co-organization of other psychiatric events in the country, in co-operation with other professional associations, clinical and educational institutions: The First Alcoholology Symposium (Tuzla 2010), Symposia of Biological Psychiatry in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bihać 2010, Konjic 2011 and Jajce 2012) as well as traditional Symposia in Mostar named Psychiatric Saturday (2010 to 2012). Members of our Association had reduced registration fees for Symposia with payment for participation on them and all the lecturers from B-H are in order members of the PABH. These activities are promoted UPUBiH continuously in the country through three Annual psychiatric conferences, which have a remarkable quality and continuously growth of the participants (between 100 and 200 participants), building a distinctive tradition outside the framework of B-H.

From the beginning, special attention is devoted to developing quality relationships with the world's largest professional psychiatric community, the World Psychiatric Association (WPA), whose is the PABH a Full Member (Member Society) (one of 135 of them), and every member of our Association is automatically a WPA Individual Member (as one of the benefits of the PABH Membership). This co-operation is the first serious international promotion of whole psychiatric community in B-H following its reorganization through the PABH. Since 2009, we take a very active participation in the creation of WPA segment named WPA News and Media Channels, reporting on events in B-H, organized or co-organized by the PABH, but also about all other Association's activities (WPA 2012); we provided an our opinions considering to applications of other worldwide organizations/associations for a WPA Membership (Member Societies or Affiliate Member); 40 Members of the PABH took the active participation of our members in the Survey of the WPA and WHO towards diagnostic systems (ICD 11), conducted among all WPA Member Societies (Reed et al. 2011); assisting the participation of young psychiatrists at conferences supported by the WPA; regular contacts and informing

of our Zonal representatives (WPA Zone 9); the activities in the WPA Early Career Council, where our representative was among the most actively engaged members of this body and had full support of the WPA in providing costs for participation at the XV World Congress of Psychiatry which has been held in Buenos Aires (Argentina) on September 2011. The PABH took particularly active role took into preparations for the maintenance of the Extraordinary and Ordinary WPA General Assembly in Buenos Aires (September 2011) through the nominations of several eminent Professors for the elections of the WPA Officers and had our Representative as the Voting Delegate at WPA Assemblies in Argentina, first time in many years. The WPA President and our Zonal Representative emphasized on several occasions that the PABH has become one of the most active and most visible Associations within the WPA in a short period of time, with many commendations to the PABH Leadership but to all PABH Members too. Based on these ongoing activities, WPA has been supported National Congress of Psychiatrists of Bosnia and Herzegovina through Co-sponsorship, what has given to our Congress significant dimension of international psychiatric conference, in a global framework.

On the other hand, part of our activities on the international promotion of the PABH has been focused towards strengthening the previous good connections and co-operation with regional psychiatric associations, primarily the Serbian Psychiatric Association and the Croatian Psychiatric Association, through a continuous exchange of lecturers at regional professional conferences and professional information between our associations, but also mutual promotion of our activities. The continuity of active participation in regional associations was also continued. Thus our eminent Professors are members of Leadership in the Danube countries Psychiatric Association of Danube Countries (Danubina), while this year we had representative at the General Assembly of the Psychiatric Association of Eastern Europe and the Balkans (PAEEB) which has been held in Belgrade (Serbia).

During 2010, following preliminary negotiations we have submitted an application for membership of the European Psychiatric Association (EPA) National Psychiatric Associations/ Societies (NPAs) (EPA 2012), then in the status of the Corporate Member, which we have become since March 2011. We are one of the most active associations in the EPA NPAs, and had this year on the 20th EPA Congress in Prague formally appointed PABH observer on Extraordinary and Ordinary EPA General Assembly, but also formal PABH Representative on the Meeting/Assembly of the Council of EPA NPAs, when Vice- President of the PABH was elected as the Secretary General of the Council. From this year, as a part of changes in the EPA organizational structure, all Association in EPA NPAs became a full member of the EPA, and as a benefit of membership in the PABH our members get the status of Affiliate EPA Members,

with the advantages that status brings to them. On the other hand we provide a continuous contribution to all EPA activities and initiatives, which are particularly intense in this year. B-H National Psychiatric Congress held in Tuzla under the EPA Patronage, but also EPA support our association and Congress through two CME courses.

In addition to all the above mentioned activities of our associations at the international level, there is certainly important participation of each of our members on international professional conferences, which directly promote the association and its objectives.

The PABH Members from the beginning were the primary interest of the Association. The last four years they are regularly and transparently informed about all relevant events both in B-H and worldwide; had the possibility to browse several international journals (World Psychiatry, Journal of Affective Disorders, European Psychiatry, Early Interventions in Psychiatry and others), but also the more recent editions of Textbooks of Psychiatry and other psychiatric books of various publishers in electronic format; they received regular updates previously sent notification of events in psychiatry or the more recent events announced in the current year. It was established the practice that each member receives electronically The Annual List of International Events in Psychiatry, with in average of forty major events in the region, Europe and worldwide, yearly. This proved to be very useful practice, because our members could plan their participation in this event on time and every year our Association had its representatives/participants on most important psychiatric events, with many active participants, that were presenting their own achievements in the practice in B-H.

In late 2010 was made web site of the Association as an important part of the broader promotion. Through the website is possible that all PABH members and other interested individuals or organizations find out more about Association, its basic documents, the Leadership structure, contacts, and to browse these materials as well as the Membership Application Form. Modes of joining or extending of the PABH membership are clearly defined and accessible to all visitors of the website. On the website we developed components with the two alphabets (Latin and Cyrillic) and on local languages of peoples and in English, set the basic international documents from the field of psychiatric ethics (Declarations of Madrid, Hawaii and Helsinki), as a part of commitments toward the WPA and one of the conditions for WPA Membership (Madrid Declaration), than allow through the links the release of all the relevant regional associations, EPA and WPA, as well as some of the regional institutions and particularly support Project of Mental Health in Bosnia and Herzegovina through the direct link, in which participate all members of the PABH and in the Leading Bodies of the Project our Members are the majority (in the field of medicine-psychiatry). Also, all events sponsored or co-sponsored by PABH with additional materials, are appropriately

presented and published on our website (UPUBIH 2010). The PABH does not finance the maintenance of the website, because it has been found the donors/sponsors for it, as a part of efforts to understand the importance of the PABH in our country. Certainly that the content of the website will be enriched further, for what we will need and expect the engagement of every PABH member.

For purposes of The Third Congress of Psychiatrists of Bosnia and Herzegovina with International participation, as the first major professional event that we organize, has been made a special Congress website. We shall continue with a tradition of organizing a national conference in the future.

About our activities has been informed promptly and reported by inform about the activities reported print and electronic media (e newspapers in B-H such as eZdravlje, epssa, as well as many TV Channels and newspapers in the country), and for all events in the country we have formed events announcements of events on social network Facebook.

The Psychiatric Association of Bosnia-Herzegovina will continuously follow all events in Bosnia and Herzegovina related to the psychiatric profession and respond appropriately in all cases that assess the need to prevent violations of human rights of users of psychiatric services and mental health professionals, various types of attacks and pressures on the psychiatric profession, or the abuse of psychiatry by individuals, institutions, media, etc., in order to preserve the dignity of the profession psychiatry as profession as well as psychiatrists the experts in this field of medicine and science.

CONCLUSION

The PABH is the leading psychiatric association B-H, an active member of the largest and most important international organizations, with a continuous increase of the number of members who recognize the importance, relevance and quality of the PABH and further progress in its development and tendencies to harmonize psychiatric practice in the country and internationally.

The PABH is included in major psychiatric events in the country (active participation in the organization, logistics and scientific programme) and experts from our country are involved in an increasing number of international professional bodies.

All of the above encourage PABH Leadership and Members to further expansion of the activities and rebuilding of the achieved results, with intensive involvement in professional, medical, social and reformist

movements in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the aim to achieving best practices for the organization and functionality of professional medical association in global frameworks.

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