

Humanities for medical students

Nauki filozoficzne dla studentów medycyny

ALLA ALEXEENKO, NATALIYA MARTYENKO

Philosophy, Sociology and Medical Sociology Department, Kharkiv National Medical University, Kharkiv, Ukraine

Artykuł dotyczy filozofii edukacji humanitarnej i kultury zdrowia. Autorki przedstawiają różne punkty widzenia na temat głównych elementów filozofii zdrowia i zdrowego stylu życia oraz proponują wyładować studentom medycyny kursy etyki, duchowości, kultury zdrowotnej. Tę wiedzę studenci ukraińscy mogą wykorzystywać podczas praktyk sanitarno-edukacyjnych. Mogą oni zaoferować popularne pogadanki – nie tylko dla specjalistów, ale też dla zwykłych ludzi, jako pomoc w tworzeniu podstawowych umiejętności prowadzenia zdrowego stylu życia i ochrony przed chorobami niebezpiecznymi i nieuleczalnymi.

Słowa kluczowe: filozofia zdrowia, edukacja humanitarna, duchowość i zdrowie, kultura zdrowotna, zdrowy styl życia, etyczne problemy medycyny

The article dwells upon the philosophy of humanitarian education and culture of health, which plays an important role in the formation of the student's personality. The authors of the article substantiate the necessity of some educational courses for the students of medical schools, such as "Ethic" and "Ethical Problems of Medicine", "Spirituality and Health", "Culture of Health", etc. The knowledge gained on these courses can be used by the students during their sanitary-educational practices – in their work with the population, for the formation of basic skills of healthy lifestyle against incurable diseases.

Key words: philosophy of health, humanitarian training, spirituality and health, culture of health, ethical problems of medicine

© Hygeia Public Health 2014, 49(1): 12-14

www.h-ph.pl

Nadesłano: 05.02.2014

Zakwalifikowano do druku: 21.02.2014

Adres do korespondencji / Address for correspondence

Alla Alexeenko, Doctor of Philosophical Sciences, Head of Philosophy, Sociology and Medical Sociology Department, Professor, Kharkiv National Medical University
4, Lenin av., Kharkiv, Ukraine, 61022
tel. +38 057 70 77 395, e-mail: alexeenko46@mail.ru
Nataliya Martynenko PhD
Associated Professor, Kharkiv National Medical University
4, Lenin av., Kharkiv, Ukraine, 61022
tel. +38 057 70 77 347, e-mail: nmartynenko@ukr.net

Humanitarian education plays an important role in the formation of the student's personality. It forms scientific outlook, value orientation and maintains a vital position of the student's youth. Student years have to be the period of the character, intellect and values perfection. The system of value orientations defines the attitude of a person towards the surrounding world, other people, and themselves. It is the basis of outlook and the main point of motivation for vital activity and "philosophy of life".

The medical university aims to give students knowledge, forms skills and attainments in the most important fields; teaches them to broaden their knowledge permanently, and continue on the way of self-perfection in profession and life; creates conditions for the development of initiative and doctor's creative individuality.

Philosophy plays a significant role in this process. We offer students elective courses "Ethic" and "Ethical Problems of Medicine". A big variety of ethical

aspects of medical activity have been discussed in these courses: communication of doctor and patient, the results of introduction of modern biotechnologies into medical practice, etc. Spirituality of modern medicine can become a big point for the elective course "Spirituality and Health". The topic of the correlation of spirituality and health became very important especially in the last decade and was actively debated not just by clergymen, but also by physicians and their patients. The knowledge of human nature is a vital necessity and the element of general culture of an individual. Unfortunately, the majority of courses at medical universities mostly give the information on human diseases, without any detailed explanation how to take care of health.

Humanitarian training has to be filled in by the anthropological content. Medical activity is very complicated one. Medicine uses new technologies and different methods for treatment and the majority of people are sure that it is enough and they should not

take care of their health. There are some important aspects of health, such as spiritual, psychological, physical, and social ones. The spiritual aspect of health involves understanding the integrity of our identity, defines the sense of our life, and our internal harmony. The compulsory part of spiritual health of a person is the capacity for empathy and compassion, honesty, kindness, and tolerance. The psychological aspect of health is a balance of psychic processes and their manifestations and it is an ability of people to control the situation of high stress, a life based on the co-understanding and emotional comfort in society, as well as inner personal comfort. The physical aspect of health provides optimum performance of all systems of the human body (cardiovascular, respiratory, muscular, etc.). This notion of “physical health” is based on the ability to control the body, physical endurance, and high efficiency and employability. The social factor of health helps to understand the significance of health for social and individual life. The society has to support human health, because in this case healthy citizens can do maximum for successful development [1].

The culture of health is an important component of general culture of a person. It defines the formation, preservation and strengthening of health. Each person is not just “a consumer” of health, but also “a producer” of it. We have to remember that health is “a gift of grace” and we should use it very carefully. The level of health culture can be high or low. The high level means being in harmony with nature and surrounding people. The important elements of health culture are: careful and right attitude of individuals towards themselves, the pursuit of self-knowledge, formation, development and perfection of own identity. The people, who have lot of diseases, excess body mass, abuse alcohol, smoke, are irritable and do not feel comfort in the communication with other people, do not follow the principles of healthy lifestyle – have a low level of health culture. It is necessary to understand that health culture is not only the sum of knowledge, skills and experiences, but also a healthy, human-oriented lifestyle. The level of health culture depends not only on spare capacities of a human being (physical, psychic and spiritual), but also on the skill to use them in the right way. So, longevity, a healthy and happy life depends mostly on the human being. . . . Modern human beings of any age, nationality or race have to go through the mutation in the sphere of spirituality and in perfection of physical body. In the sphere of spirituality people have to follow moral laws and principles; have to take care of the people around, and they should not forget about their own health (spiritual, emotional and physical); people should be pure both in deeds and thoughts; they should not hate anybody or anything (because hatred is drying

the souls), as a result people will get the chance to feel gracious; it is necessary to refuse negative emotions, because they lead people to unhappy life; mankind should be humble and follow God’s will doing everything for realization of personal missions on the Earth. In perfection of physical body human beings have to prepare their physical bodies for the vibrations of new epoch, by eating light food without toxins; they have to remember that tobacco, narcotics, and alcohol ruin the immune system, as a result people have cancer, allergies and other incurable diseases; the population has to limit the consumption of products, which can cause the problems of the digestive system (they are individual for each person); people should eat tasty and useful food; they should not forget about the necessity of drinking pure still water. Each person can have a long, healthy and happy life, if they accepted all those lessons of wisdom, which allowed to reach a definite stage of development [2]. Unfortunately, today the majority of population manifests a low level of culture and knowledge in the sphere of nutrition. People are not aware of a harmful impact of some products on health. Therefore we offer the elective course for medical students “Culture of Health” to complete this gap.

The economic crisis is accompanied by the crisis of morality, thus it is necessary to help our students in spiritual and moral upbringing.

Humanism has to be the main point of modern education. The contradiction between anthropocentrism and socio-centrism could be solved by the orientation of the individual onto the universal values, such as Truth, Goodness and Beauty.

In the 20th century the main points of education balanced between the poles. Transcendental values correlated to mental, emotional, and volitional characteristics of personality. In the history of pedagogic thought Jan Amos Comenius advocated the need of three kinds of education: intellectual, moral and religious. Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi considered that there were three fundamental forces that formed human nature: mental, power of heart and technical ones. All of them connected with mind, heart, and hands. The education of mind means the accumulation of knowledge; upbringing of heart means moral and religious views formation, education for hands means physical training and technical skills. Love is the deepest internal power. It is the basis of heart power, which encourages the moral and religious behavior. The ideal human being, for J. Pestalozzi, combines these three fundamental types of education [3].

Doctors are healers. Their task is to help patients in renewing the broken integrity of the human body. This process should be realized not only on a physical level, but also on a deep, sacral one.

Russian religious philosopher Ivan Ilyin (1883-1954) in the article "On Calling the Doctor" had written of spiritual nature of a doctor and a patient. From his point of view, they both have to be spiritual creatures, so together they could find the right way of healing [4]. Healers have to follow their own advice and should not sin because only then all their energetic and physical structures, thoughts, feelings, emotions, and wishes will be in harmony. It is important, because the true health of a person originates in the control of emotional and mental spheres.

We can find the examples of a similar analysis in the works of doctors-philosophers of the East. The Spiritual Physick of Abu Bakr Muhammad Ibn Zakariya Al-Razi gave lots of advice for the correction of emotional points of human behavior to avoid the manifestation of many diseases [5].

Unfortunately, globalization and scientific-technical progress negatively affected spiritual, psychic and physical health of people [6].

There are many alarming trends, such as: rapid development of biotechnology, genetic engineering, and technology for modulation of the DNA structure; the rapid development of information technology and increasing range of information (exponentially); active environmental degradation; the emergence of new types of dependencies (computer, game, etc.), and strengthening the traditional ones (drugs, alcohol and carbohydrate abuse); increase of the gap (polarity) between wealth and poverty; the concentration of vast wealth and power in hands of limited groups of people; depletion of the huge number of people, etc. The general sense of these trends suggests that the recent development of civilization distorted and disrupted the natural integrity of all life processes which are common at the basis, and which maintained the spirituality and spiritual institutions of the society. For thousands of years moral laws were the criteria for human life, maintaining the ongoing process of human evolution in their natural development. Today, the whole system of evolutionary ascent and harmonious

movement of life is destroyed and replaced by a surrogate model of a "quick success". It does not encourage the spiritual evolution of an individual, and develops the human selfishness, driven by calculating, cold-blooded, integral behavior, and is completely directed by unspiritual mind. This trend is one of the most disturbing and dangerous nowadays and the spiritually developed people have to do their best trying to correct this situation, because all of us can observe the increase of cancer and cardiovascular diseases; the emergence of a number of new and previously unknown diseases and syndromes (orphan ones); general increasing of mental load, the appearance of burnout and chronic fatigue; an increasing proportion of mental illnesses and disorders (Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, multiple sclerosis, etc.); an increased number of suicides; the deterioration of quality of life and quality of death and the weakening of all types of health from a huge number of people, who became hostages of the achievements of scientific and technical progress, full and absolute freedom of human ego and super-ego. Clergymen and Christian physicians subdivided diseases into the physical, emotional and spiritual ones. First of all, we should define the disease. The disease is a violation of vital activity under the influence of harmful irritants of external or internal surroundings. In this situation the adaptation of organism to the external environment becomes lower, but at the same time all defenses are mobilized [7].

The priests, clergymen and prophets of the ancient times intuitively knew that they interfered in a very specific area. Not only in ancient times, but now there is knowledge of cleaning the internal field from negative thoughts and feelings, which can become the energetic cause of diseases. A true doctor can not heal just the physical body without taking into account the emotional and spiritual problems [4].

Nowadays people mostly depend on the material world. Unfortunately, the evolution of human being has led to the disregard of irrational intuition that regulates the emotional and physical health [8].

Piśmiennictwo / References

1. Горащук ВП. Проблема здоров'я в житті сучасного суспільства [in:] Валеологія. Київ, 1998: 4-14.
2. Васильев ЭВ. Способ жизни в эру Водолея. Теория и практика самопознания и самооздоровления. Москва, ГУМУС, 1996: 3-240.
3. Слостенин ВА, Чижакова ГИ. Введение в педагогическую аксиологию: Учебное пособие для студ. высш. пед. уч. заведений. Москва, 2003: С. 27-31.
4. Ильин И. Религиозный смысл философии. Москва, ООО „Издательство АСТ”, 2003: 3-694.
5. The Spiritual Physick of Rhazes. London, 1950: 2-116. http://files.libertyfund.org/files/1791/0955_Bk.pdf
6. Церковь и медицина: на пороге третьего тысячелетия. Минск, 1999: 3-192.
7. Яцкевич КВ. Духовность и медицина [in:] Психология. Пермь, 2010. № 20: 22-30.
8. Леви-Брюль Л. Сверхъестественное в первобытном мышлении. М.: Педагогика-Пресс, 1994: 3-329.