

WORKSHOP E:

LEVEL OF THE COMMUNITY: CARE OF ADDICTS

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Following the publication of the Alma-Ata Declaration on Primary Health Care in September 1978 and the development of the "Health for all by the year 2000"-movement, most European countries began to move towards increasing community oriented primary care and health promotion. Medical education should, accordingly, reflect these changing concepts of medicine and become more oriented to the needs of the community, leaving behind its exclusively hospital oriented, curative approach.

Being aware of the unique historical situation having passed exactly 11 years since the Alma-Ata Declaration and having to go another 11 years until the year 2000, our group, consisting of 17 medical teachers and medical students from 7 European countries, discussed the general problems of community medicine and, specifically, the ways in which scientific thinking can be incorporated into and encouraged in the teaching of community medicine. The particular example specified in the workshop was the care of addicts in the community.

We recognized the need to insert a course in community medicine into each traditional curriculum to start a step-by-step reorientation towards community-based medical education instead of designing a completely new track or school for community-oriented health sciences. We attempted to define what the aims and objectives of such a course in community medicine should be for the student. Some of our suggestions included the following:

- the need for the students to appreciate and be trained in the cooperative and multiprofessional approach to community care by multiprofessional education,
- the realization that doctors must function in association with many other professional and participating lay groups in the community, some of which may be regarded as being more important than the doctors themselves,
- the recognition that it is preferable to practice preventive medicine and active health promo-

tion rather than overemphasising curative medicine.

Regarding the treatment of addicts in the community, it was felt that the following were some important components for the students to be included in the model for community medicine:

- communication skills,
- the development of an appropriate and realistic attitude towards the addict and towards themselves, in particular appreciating the limits and extent of their own influence,
- the identification and exploring of the parts of their own personality endangered by addiction, by this learning to be non-judgemental,
- a knowledge of the community network of support systems (e.g. self-aid groups) and mediating structures.

A number of ways of stimulating and training scientific thinking in such a programme were discussed:

1. We heard how in Norway and Poland students are being encouraged to pursue a research topic on a matter related to the community (e.g. addiction); in so doing, they can learn in practice how to make use of scientific thinking in using a scientific methodology such as epidemiology. Such a research topic could easily offer exemption from an examination as an incentive to understand the importance of scientific thinking.
2. We saw how, in a community practice in the Federal Republic of Germany, use of self-aid groups is made in the treatment of addicts. It was agreed that, if the medical students themselves were required to participate in self-discussion groups in the first two years of their medical education, and, later on, in junior Balint groups, they could learn not only about communication

skills but also about the theory of communication and the scientific process to analyze interpersonal relations.

3. A rotation of some kind in community medicine like in Great Britain or Sweden, e.g. with a G.P., at a health centre or as long term care for families, is essential. Before this, specific aims should be set and the attention of students drawn to the most important theoretical issues like the complex scientific concepts of social support and social networks. Afterwards a full de-briefing should occur which will allow the opportunity for reinforcement and reflection of scientific thinking.

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