

CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNICATION IN PUBLIC HEALTH CAMPAIGNS CONDUCTED IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY IN ROMANIA

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Abstract: Disease prevention has been a major concern of those working for health care in Romania. The first part of the twentieth century witnessed a dramatic fight against infectious diseases and the development of social medicine. Many health campaigns were conducted during this period.

Communication in these campaigns had an important role in informing the public about the conduct of campaigns and expected results. Peace or war, the campaigns were promoted to the public through various methods widely used at the time, the most important being both the posters, and publication of articles in the press.

Although it was a turbulent period marked by two World Wars, the transition from one social organization to another, many socio-political and economic turmoil, Romanian medical life succeeded to note the conduct of various activities that include those popularization of medical science and especially awareness of the importance of medical and medicine in general.

If nationally the number of articles to popularize public health campaigns conducted nationwide is unknown, locally, the research carried out on two local newspapers: Gazeta de Transilvania (1940-1944) and Drum Nou (1944-1949) appears to have been published a number of 334 articles on medical life in Brasov, of which 143 in Gazeta de Transilvania and 191 in Drum Nou, in which a large part will address issues such campaigns to combat infectious diseases or social and public education to reduce these diseases.

Keywords: history of medicine, public health campaigns, communication, first half of twentieth century

Historical and legislative context

Romanian medicine in the twentieth century was marked not only by the two world wars, the transition from one social order to another, socio-economic and social unrest, but the authorities tendency to organize national preventive activities, activities which were reflected both in the development of health campaigns to eradicate certain diseases such as cholera and malaria, and in mapping campaigns in terms of the health of the Romanian territory, such as the campaign from 1938 or permanent health education campaigns, as those conducted by representatives of the medical ASTRA.

Sanitary laws of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century ensured not only the structuring of funds and their distribution nationally but reorganization of the system, including the establishment of structures able to deal with local or national prevention. (G. Banu, 1935, V. L. Bologna et al, 1972),

Three military and historical points are drawn in this context: the Second Balkan War, the first and second world war, during which the information about the measures that have been taken to combat diseases such as cholera or typhus was made public.

Although the twentieth century can be considered the century of specialization, he is also a century of healthcare.

Preventive orientation was complemented by the curative one, both raising specific ethical issues. The first half of the twentieth century is also the period of developing the fight

against infectious diseases, the development of vaccines and antibiotics, but also the one in which the "Spanish flu" of 1918-1920 caused a number of casualties comparable to World War. (M. C. Banu, 1935)

However, Romanian population's health was not at all satisfactory, placing Romania on the last places in Europe.

Romanian press in the first half of the twentieth century - Historical highlights

The role of medical press is well known in informing the medical staff, but the non-medical press, often seen as the fourth power in the state, plays an important role in informing the public and influencing public attitudes to a topic or another, including measures which must be taken to prevent illness. (C. Antip, 1979).

The large number of periodicals of the time, and the diversity of their spheres of influence ensured not only the need to present all views on the measures taken in health, but also a critical analysis of these.

The nonmedical press between the two worlds wars is completed by the medical one, both having exponential growth. The medical press added a number of periodic points of reference in which the flow of information was carried out under close scientific verification. The main publications have been: „Revista Științelor Medicale” (1905), „Spitalul” (1920), „Clujul medical”, „Mișcarea medicală” (1928), „Buletinul societății de chirurgie” (1926-1929), „Buletinul societății de dermatologie și silifigrafie” (1921-1931), „Buletinul societății de psihiatrie” (1936-1943), „Sănătatea” (1901-1940), „Medicul nostru” (1937-1944), „Revista de chirurgie” (founded in 1897), „Spitalul” (founded in 1881); „Clujul medical” (founded in 1920), „Revista medico-chirurgicală din Iași” (1924), „Buletinul institutului de balneologie”, „Revista română de malarie” (1934-1948), „Revista de pediatrie” (1942-1947), „Buletin medico-terapeutic” (1924-1936), „Buletinul societății pentru studiul tuberculozei” (1931-1939). (G. Duțescu, S. Benone, 1961, L. Rogoza (2010b)



Medical press: *Medicul Român*, *Revista Științelor medicale*

Epidemics, health campaign and how they were reflected in newspapers

Epidemics have raised since the beginning of mankind public health problems requiring limitation of their impact, not only by measures taken by the governmental or

organizational structures in each country but by trying to change people's mentality and their attitude towards a situation like this.

Thus in "Ardealul" newspaper from 31.12.1923 (Razii sanitare, 1923) and in the issue 39 of 1934 (Dela serviciul sanitar, 1934) are detailed sanitary raids or severe measures to be taken to limit outbreaks.

Newspaper "Adevarul" No 16110 from 1936 contains an article about the concern at ministerial level to combat seasonal epidemics and the campaign which was conducted for this purpose. Summer enteritis and enterocolitis dizenteriforme required - as shown in the mentioned newspaper - a campaign of conferences, individual counselling, municipal ordinances, bills, etc. Among the objectives of the campaign are worth mentioning: monitoring drinking water and encouraging mothers to prefer natural nutrition of children under 1 year.

Not last, it is recommended to check food storage conditions and their conservation. (Combaterea epidemiilor sezoniere, 1936)

Campaign against polio is shown in 1936, in the newspaper "Adevarul" in an article which presented the measures taken at national level and the rules of conduct in case of any clinical manifestations of disease.

Typhus epidemic and the need to conduct educational campaigns to this effect have been reflected in the newspaper "Ardealul" from April 22, 1938 who published an article under the title "We must get rid of typhus". The author concluded the article with this: "no matter how much health service will be concerned, as many quarantines they decide, typhus will not be cut off if laziness and indolence of others and the lack of popular bath soap expensiveness will endure". (Trebuie să scăpăm de tifosul exantematic, 1938)

Health campaign results were also presented in local newspapers, as has happened in Gazeta de Transilvania No 79 of 1938 or no. 89 in 1938, showing in detail the conduct of the campaign, and the results obtained.



Gazeta de Transilvania no 79 from 1938 and no. 89 from 1938

In the newspaper "Adevarul" dr. MC Banu published an article on "Influenza" which emphasized the three important aspects of the disease: symptoms, treatment and prevention of disease. (Banu, M. C., 1935, L. Rogozea et al. 2011)

Tuberculosis is also an important issue at a declarative level, in the newspaper "Adevarul" No 14540 there is an article in which tuberculosis is considered to be one of the most dangerous diseases "comes imperceptibly, includes the unexpected and grinding bodies, overwhelms souls of hundreds of thousands of patients". (Pericolul social al tuberculozei, 1931)

Nationally, in the 1938-1939 period has been one of the most complex health campaigns conducted throughout the country, being consulted a large proportion of the population of the country. Although it had a relatively short duration, the campaign managed to achieve ambitious goals: important health records, the application of individual and collective hygiene measures, controls health units or health education of the population. (Leașu et al, 2011a; Leașu et al, 2011b, Rogozea L., 2010a)

Based on a very good organization in 10 inspectorates and mobilizing a large number of human resources, in addition to achieving the health monographs of localities, almost 7,770,000 individuals were examined, over 42,000 radiological examinations were performed, more than 77,000 samples of blood have been analysed and over 360,000 injections were made. (L. Rogozea, C. Nemet, 2001)

Health education campaigns in the first half of the twentieth century Transylvania

Health education campaigns conducted by ASTRA or other physicians in Transylvania, can be exemplified by articles hosted by two of the era known newspaper "Gazeta de Transilvania" and "Drum Nou". (L. Rogozea, R. Miclăuș, 2003, L. Rogozea, 2005)

"Gazeta de Transilvania", Bărițiu's and Muresan's newspaper, but also Vasile Popp's (1940-1944) and "Drum Nou", which is the continuer of the first (1944-1949), were a true rostrum of health prevention through the 334 articles about medical life in Brasov, of which 143 in "Gazeta de Transilvania" and 191 in "Drum Nou".

However, the change of political regime after 1944 was characterized by reduced interest in health education articles, but it should be noted 1942 when 40 such articles were published.

To illustrate how information communication about health education campaigns in Transylvania was conducted, we refer mainly of articles written by personalities of the medical world: N. Caliman, V. Stinghe, M. Suciș-Sibianu or N. Pompiliu (N. Pompiliu, 1938)

Dr. V. Sterie in the article "Pupils Hygiene" published in Gazeta de Transilvania No 77 from 1942, realized a real moment of medical education about the rules of hygiene, the parents and teachers need to know to be able to direct the children.

Between 1944-1950 education campaigns were taken by the newspaper "Drum Nou", among topics being addressed: typhus (1945, 1947), TB (1945, 1946, 1947), typhoid fever (1947).

Education conferences held by the Society for the prevention of tuberculosis, for example, have been widely communicated in the newspapers, increasing accessibility to information and ensuring the dissemination of information to the population.

Educational conferences of health promotion campaigns in the first half of the twentieth century were about alcoholism, tuberculosis, syphilis, scabies, typhus, cholera, scarlet fever, rabies, asthma, gout, epilepsy. (L. Rogozea et al, 2004)

Conferences are written in an accessible style, the information is easy to read and assimilated by readers, often dotted with suggestive phrases, such as Dr. Tălășescu's, about alcoholism, "Alcohol is a poison that stuns the conscience." (O. Andreescu et al, 2012)

Health education activities carried out through conferences, which were reflected in the non-medical press, have been suggestively presented by Dr. Nicholae Caliman in the

article: "Let's defend our health": *"Every man in this country should know the causes of the diseases, widening them and defend against them. And when, in the last hut they will be known, and then we will not need doctors in our homes so much, we will remain exempt from much pain and evil, and then the state will have the greatest wealth: a people strong and healthy."* (L. Rogozea, 2003)

Conclusions

As pointed by Gh. Marinescu in his speech at the Romanian Academy: "modern medicines not only aspire to individual care isolated from society, but seek a higher purpose, to preserve society from various diseases and improving the human race" (Rusu N Dorina, 1997)

Using the medical and non-medical media in presenting epidemics, epidemic measures that can be taken in a country is not only an effective means of obtaining tangible results in public education, but also a compulsory mean of information.

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