Complementary and Alternative Medicine as a subject of interest of Medical Sociology in Poland

Healers and healing - sociological view

From socialism to capitalism - social, cultural, and political determinants of development of complementary and alternative medicine in Poland.

Political transformation in Poland brought a number of structural changes in the demographic processes, social structure, the quality of citizens lives, character of religiosity, etc. A very important part of the socialism in Poland, a centralized, formalized, bureaucratic, statism, and indeed not effective health care system has lost the monopoly on medical services. Free market resulted in the emergence of initiatives that use the principle of what is not forbidden is allowed. As a result, there is emergence and spread of healing business.

Transformation period was the time of criticism of health care institutions but also made a fundamental change in the sphere of values. The Poles had departed from tradition values began to explore the alternative or minority values that would serve to re-define their identity.

This changes also applies to the sphere of health and disease. Some role in accelerating change of notion of health awareness in Poland should be attributed to the increasing popularity of so-called the "ecological concerns of environmental degradation" and its impact on human health. Element of ecological thinking was a critical look at "pharmaceutical" medicine and promotion of alternative therapies, perceived as safer (without risk of complications) and more natural (e.g. herbal medicine, homeopathy).

This trend is significant even in part of a well educated Poles population.

Some role in this process can also be attributed to the movement and ideas of "New Age", which include many references and guidance an health. In the spirit of this movement is putting pressure on individual body shape and design, the ability to experience emotions and self-healing or self-healing under the guidance of healer, limiting its role to the guide of patient.

Therefore in the transformation period increased the number of people who took part of the team occupied so far by doctors and medicine, namely, healers, folk healers, patients themselves or their family, friends and internet forums.

Migration launched after the collapse of the socialist system, resulted in the influx of many citizens of former Soviet Union. A significant part of this stream of people were spiritual healers, chiropractors or acupuncturists.

Today, thanks to the globalization process Polish customers have even more choice (e.g. popular with bloodless operations conducted by the Philippine healers).

FAMOUS HEALERS IN POLAND

The mass interest in the Canadian spiritual healer Clive Harris (1978). His phenomena was widely commented in the media. One of the most talented polish documentary director - Marek Łoziński made film about him.

M. Sokołowska decided that a special session, supported by the Polish Sociological Society's Ministerial Social Science Section, would be devoted to this subject – the decision was based on the results of a D. Defeudis's survey. At the same time Sokołowska introduced this subject at the MA seminar at the University of Warsaw. The concept was the study by M. Kanisz and S. Wasilewski – "Clive Harris as a social phenomenon" (1999).

Clive Harris in action. Transfer of 'energy'.

Annalys Kasprowsky - healer from Kievan Ruthenian-Ukrainian psychotherapy. In the 90s he became famous in the country's former Soviet Union and also other countries of the former socialist bloc. In addition to therapy "face to face", he began to heal at a distance, through television. Famous event was the use of television to anesthetize for surgery using hypnosis two women - one of them single, when the doctors required her abdomen. Polish television also decided to issue him a few programs that continued in 1990-1992 very popular. The most notable decision was the program viewed at the peak of 35% of Polish.

Kasprowsky back, on Russian television screens in 2000 and maintained his talk show with the participation of well-known figures in public life. He has to manage, how to heal and overcome life's problems.

Kasprowsky's phenomenon has become a subject of research of sociologists of Lublin (W. Fandowski, J. Świerczek R. Ochman), who analyzed the social context of the phenomenon, and tried to answer the question: Who are the people who wittingly the "prognosis - Letters to an unknown" (1999).

Kasprowsky with president of Poland - Lech Wałęsa.


Almost parallel to her publications related to WHO reports on the role of unconventional methods of treatment in non-European countries, Magdalena Sokołowska became interested in the Polish context of the problems in question in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Sokołowska was surprised by the mass interest in the spiritual healer Clive Harris. Reflections on the "Harris case" made it possible for the first time to build the theoretical foundations needed for the analysis of "different medicine". (More information in the box "Famous healers")

II. Remarks on the "Clive Harris Phenomenon" (1978-1980)

During the period in question M. Sokołowska devoted her studies to the expansion of "alternative medicine" in Western European countries and in the USA.

Sokołowska pointed out the progressing processes of professionalization and "complementary forms of treatment", referring mainly to the examples of orthopaedics and chiropractors.

She discussed the mechanisms of "social responses of medicine" to CAM, referring to the model authored by E. Freidson (Freidson, 1976).

She described and interpreted the range of social popularity of unconventional methods and the reasons for their social acceptance.

She analyzed what were and what should be the relations between doctors and healers, and she supported partnership models of such relations.

She described the characteristics of Europe's seven most popular unconventional techniques and presented the results of the sociological studies on CAM conducted in the USA and the Netherlands.

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III. Sokołowska's Interest in CAM in the Countries of Euro-American Culture (1986-1987)

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