

professionals, who also originate from fields other than medicine and who are active in different levels and segments of healthcare, can we expect to enrich the discussion, establish interdisciplinarity and elevate quality of decision-making in the system of healthcare.

Slovenia is one of the few countries that still has no school of public health (occasional postgraduate courses cannot be counted as a valid substitute), even though there were initiatives and technical plans prepared for its establishment years ago (3). The role of school of public health is to provide perpetual, systematic and quality basic and complementary training on a theoretically and methodologically demanding field of healthcare, which lies on the crossroads of various scientific disciplines (natural sciences, sociology, humanism, organisational studies etc.). Simultaneously, school of public health can act as a forum for democratic debate where different viewpoints can be opposed and discussed. Research, education and expertise obtained from schools of public health are, in developed societies, an important

prerequisite of acceptable, efficient, and sustainable development of healthcare system. It is also important to highlight that the government is accountable for the health of the population and it is therefore a responsibility of the government to work towards establishing a school of public health in our country. Considering relatively small expenses and large expected benefits, establishment of a school of public health is certainly justified (3). Delaying such measures obscures the further development of healthcare system in Slovenia.

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A Reflection on Public Health Through the Prism of Communication

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World Health Organization (WHO) builds the effectiveness of public health field on ten fundamental postulates. Communication or, more precisely Advocacy communication and social mobilisation for health, is identified as the ninth of the Essential Public Health Operations (EPHOs) - as it is formally named (1).

If we look at the status of health communication from academic and practical point of view, we can determine that it is a multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and even transdisciplinary field, which combines many sciences, not only medicine and communication; however, in the organization of scientific work, it was established as a branch of communication (2). Therefore, the question arises: How is it in Slovenia? Is the field of communication, which arises from social sciences, appropriately placed in the field of public health with its roots deep in the field of medicine? Are thus the communication experts (and other nonmedical profiles), working in the field of public health, appropriately placed and positioned in this field? The answer is neither simple, nor clear.

The lay eye of a Slovenian resident can detect that Slovenian healthcare has more and more diseases and thus more and more problems. Consequently, the faith in healthcare system is declining, which can be seen in the newest researches (3). It is completely logical that all of this is reflected in the field of communication, where the trust is fundamental for reaching the (communication) objectives. The current challenges for the normalization and establishment of

the possibility for successful health communication in Slovenia could include the following: the preparation of a national health communication strategy with key success factors in different fields and levels; the definition of communication standards and management of crisis communication in health; and systemic and systematic education, research and training of all people working in the field of healthcare (4). It is understandable that all of this is difficult to achieve at once, but it is a gradual build-up and introduction of order in this field, which could (may) bring us the excellence in health communication.

For the success and complete excellence in communication, we need to (thoroughly) know the environment in which we (public health) operate. Today, more than ever, we need to be aware that we are living in hypermodern times and hypermodern societies, which are extremely mediatized (5). Media is everywhere. Outside and inside. Everywhere. This is a great opportunity for public health, which brings down fences and builds bridges. And this is also one of the fundamental tasks of communication. It brings together various stakeholders, institutions, professions and even countries. Cooperation and integration is in its foundations. However, it could also be a trap, if public health experts do not cooperate close enough, if they rather compete with each other and build the importance of their own profession based on the devaluation of other professions, which also work complementary and successfully in the field of public health.

Communication can only be successful in the field of public health, if we are willing to cooperate and, if we are properly trained and equipped with all the data. From the standpoint of an individual and of an organization. Effective communication requires supportive environment from within and from outside of the organization. It needs support from different professions and profiles in healthcare, and also from management and decision-makers. The support is essential.

When we asked ourselves whether the field of communication is even appropriately placed in the field of public health, we have learned that in Slovenia it is not (yet). The support often comes only on declarative level and not in a concrete form of providing complete infrastructure, research and resources, which are essential for communication (as well as the entire field of public health) to achieve set objectives. However, steps have been made in the right direction. Nonetheless, the path ahead is still long. The communication as well is (often) a long-distance run.

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