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"JAZ BI TUDI GADA POŽRL, SAMO DA BI BILO BOLJE."

ZDRAVLJENCI IN ALTERNATIVNA MEDICINA V LJUBLJANI

Alternativna medicina se je tako v svetu kot pri nas začela vse bolj uveljavljati v zadnjih dvajsetih, tridesetih letih. Čeprav o njej govorimo kot o alternativni, največkrat nastopa v sodelovanju z uradno medicino. Zaradi njenega širšega konteksta - najprej se je začela uveljavljati v gospodarsko visoko razvitih deželah - se ne zdi ustrezno, da bi jo enačili z ljudsko medicino. Med najpogosteje omenjenimi vzroki za njeno vse večjo uveljavitev naj omenimo kritiko medicine in zahteve pacientov po spremembi odnosa na relaciji zdravnik - pacient. Alternativna medicina naj bi pokrivala manjko uradne medicine. Pojavila naj bi se v času, ko je zdravje postalo posebna vrednota in ko se je pojavila potreba po vračanju k naravi in "naravnemu zdravljenju". Nove ideje o zdravju so začele prihajati tudi iz ezoterične tradicije in vzhodnjaških zdravstvenih sistemov.

Na temelju raziskave zdravljenec v Ljubljani v letih 1994 in 1995 lahko sklepamo, da alternativna medicina na ravni posameznika zadovoljuje določene človekove potrebe. Prvi razlog, zaradi katerega se ljudje odločajo za obisk pri zdravitelju, je vsekakor želja po izboljšanju zdravstvenega stanja, bodisi da z uspehi uradne medicine niso povsem zadovoljni ali pa jih je ta celo odpisala. Pogosto gre za ljudi, ki se hkrati zdravijo s pomočjo uradne in alternativne medicine. Med redkeje omenjenimi razlogi srečamo radovednost, pritisk okolice, preventivo, preverjanje diagnoz uradne medicine, izogibanje neprijetnim posegom uradne medicine, zdravnikom in izdelkom farmacevtske industrije. Alternativna medicina se lahko povezuje z zanimanjem za duhovnost in alternativne načine življenja. Srečanje z alternativno medicino je lahko za posameznika le bežno srečanje, lahko pa tudi bistveno vpliva na njegov nadaljnji način življenja. K uporabi alternativne medicine naj bi se ženske nagibale bolj kot moški. Alternativno medicino najpogosteje uporablja starostna skupina od 40 do 51 let, kar zadeva izobrazbo, pa prevladujejo osebe s srednjo, višjo in visoko šolo.

TERMINOLOGIJA

Termin alternativna medicina mi pomeni različne preventivne, diagnostične, terapevtske in rehabilitacijske pristope, ki so se pri nas, podobno kot tudi v drugih, najprej predvsem razvitih državah, razširili približno v zadnjih dvajsetih do tridesetih letih in niso del uradne medicinske prakse. Viri alternativnih terapij so lahko zelo različni. Izvajalci alternativnih terapij znanja praviloma niso dobili preko pri nas uradno organiziranega sistema izobraževanja. Tako pojmovana alternativna medicina pa mi ne pomeni medicinskega sistema, ki bi načelno nasprotoval sodelovanju z uradno medicino. Termin alternativna medicina bi lahko brez težav nadomestila s terminom komplementarna medicina, ki nakazuje možnost sodelovanja med obema medicinskima sistemoma, vendar sem se odločila za prvega, ki je trenutno pri nas najbolj uveljavljen za pojave, ki so predmet pričujočega prispevka. Nekateri avtorji govorijo o alternativni medicini, kadar jo ljudje uporabljajo samostojno, o komplementarni pa, kadar se zdravijo z alternativno in uradno medicino istočasno (Penkala-Gawecka 1991: 43). Med avtorji so tudi taki, ki gledajo na alternativno in komplementarno medicino kot na soznačnici (Sharma 1992; 1993). Slovenski zdravniki si prizadevajo za uveljavitev termina nekonvencionalna medicina (Rožman 1993).

Nekaterim avtorjem etnologom se zdi, da je alternativna medicina sodobna različica ljudske medicine (Motyčková 1992; Wiegelmann 1987), medtem ko ju drugi ločujejo (Penkala-Gawecka 1995). Meni osebno je bližja druga možnost, predvsem zato, ker danes alternativna medicina, četudi z nekaterimi metodami ljudske medicine, deluje v povsem drugem kontekstu. Ljudje jo uporabljajo iz drugih razlogov kot so nekoč ljudsko medicino, razlike pa so tudi v ekonomskih in ideoloških temeljih. Pri uporabi termina alternativna medicina moramo vedno upoštevati konkreten prostor in čas. Ista metoda zdravljenja namreč lahko ima v različnem času in prostoru povsem drugačen status. Akupunktura je npr. na Kitajskem del tradicionalne medicine, v Evropi je imela najprej status alternativne metode zdravljenja, danes pa je v večini dežel sprejeta v okviru uradne medicine.

Medtem ko sta v sistemu uradne medicine za izvajalca in uporabnika uveljavljena termina zdravnik in bolnik oziroma pacient, uporabljam v okviru alternativne medicine za izvajalca termin zdravitelj/zdraviteljica in za uporabnika zdravljenec/zdravljenka. Zdravitelj je torej oseba, ki nastopa v vlogi tistega, ki zdravi s pomočjo metod alternativne medicine, zdravljenec pa je oseba, ki se na zdravitelja naslavlja zaradi določenih zdravstvenih težav ali, kot bomo videli kasneje, tudi iz drugih razlogov. Pri alternativni medicini lahko gre tudi za razne oblike samozdravljenja, vendar me v pričujočem prispevku zanimajo predvsem razlogi, zaradi

katerih se ljudje odločajo za obisk pri zdravitelju.

VZROKI ZA UVELJAVITEV ALTERNATIVNE MEDICINE

Raziskave tako v Evropi kot tudi v Severni Ameriki in Avstraliji kažejo na vse večji pomen alternativne medicine (Rožman 1993: 497). V Ameriki se je npr. začela pojavljati v šestdesetih letih (Grossinger 1990: 332), v Britaniji pa okoli leta 1970 (Sharma 1993: 15). V Nemčiji se je začela alternativna medicina uveljavljati konec sedemdesetih in v začetku osemdesetih let (Wiegelmann 1987: 8-9). Začetki alternativne medicine v Sloveniji segajo v sedemdeseta leta, uveljavila pa se je predvsem ob koncu osemdesetih in v začetku devetdesetih let. Med danes najbolj razširjenimi metodami alternativne medicine pri nas naj omenim zeliščarstvo, bioenergijo, *qi gong*, *reiki*, homeopatijo, kristaloterapijo, aromoterapijo, iridologijo, razne manipulativne terapije in masaže ter različne diete.

Vzroki za vse večjo uveljavitev alternativne medicine so številni. Nekateri se zdijo racionalni, drugi spet ne. Vsekakor je zanimivo, da se je začela alternativna medicina v svetovnem okviru najprej pojavljati v okoljih, ki so bila gospodarsko visoko razvita in kjer je bilo javno zdravstvo dobro organizirano. Med največkrat omenjene razloge za uveljavitev alternativne medicine vsekakor sodi kritika znanosti nasploh in v okviru tega še posebej medicine (Letica 1989: 215). Ljudje naj bi izgubili vero v vsemožnost uradne medicine in se začeli zavedati negativnih stranskih učinkov zdravil, ki jih producira farmacevtska industrija. Ivan Ilič je sredi sedemdesetih let postavil tezo, da je škoda, ki jo povzroči medicina, večja kot je njena korist (Ilič 1976: 17). Spremenil naj bi se socialni položaj zdravnika, malega "boga v belem", prav tako pa so se spremenili tudi pacienti. Vse več imajo znanja, narašča njihova samozavest. Vse, kar reče zdravnik, jim ni več sveto, pri zdravljenju hočejo aktivno sodelovati. Z osebami, ki jih zdravijo, hočejo imeti bolj aktivne medsebojne odnose in več besede pri izbiri metod zdravljenja (Sharma 1993: 17).

Zdravje je postalo pomembna vrednota. Zdravje posameznika naj bi bilo tudi v interesu družbe. Predvsem v meščanski družbi naj bi se zaradi potrebe po čim večji storilnosti povečal pomen zdravja (Will 1990: 50). Alternativna medicina naj bi bila povezana z željo po "vračanju k naravi". Nove metode zdravljenja naj bi bile zelo privlačne zaradi nove mitologije, v katero obdajajo naravo in zdravje. Poleg svojega zdravnika imeti še svojega zdravitelja naj bi bilo modno in naj bi celo kazalo na družbeni prestiž (Marković 1987: 11).

Zahod se je začel v 60-tih letih seznanjati z vzhodnjaškimi filozofijami in religijami, v okviru tega pa se je povečalo tudi zanimanje za vzhodnjaške metode zdravljenja (Boh 1989: 112). V 70-tih letih so se v industrijsko visoko razvitih državah začela pojavljati mladinska alternativna gibanja, ki so nastopala proti življenjskim in produkcijskim oblikam obstoječe družbe. Med drugim so bila kritična tudi do uradne medicine in so se zavzemala za oživitev ljudske medicine. Njihov vpliv je kasneje segel tudi na druge sloye prebivalstva. V 80-tih letih je nove poglede na zdravje prineslo gibanje nove dobe (*new age*), pomembni vplivi na nove poglede na zdravje pa so začeli prihajati tudi iz ezoterične tradicije (Wiegelmann 1987: 6-9).

Pomembno, po mnenju nekaterih že kar odločilno vlogo pri oblikovanju novih pogledov na zdravje, bolezen in zdravljenje naj bi imeli mediji. Določene zasluge za spremembe v zdravstvu ima tudi Svetovna zdravstvena organizacija, ki je leta 1987 svojim članicam svetovala, da naj v projekt *Zdravje za vse do leta 2000* vključijo tudi lokalne tradicionalne medicinske sisteme, hkrati pa naj jih tudi znanstveno ovrednotijo (Rožman 1993: 479). Po mnenju nekaterih naj bi alternativna medicina odsevala potrebo ljudi po iracionalnem, čustvenem, religiji in magiji (Rožman 1993: 480). Del specifično slovenskih razmer naj bi bilo slabo stanje gospodarstva v času razcveta alternativne medicine pri nas. Finančna kriza je vplivala na slabše plače zdravnikov in na slabšo kvaliteto zdravstvenih uslug (Letica 1989: 223). Alternativna medicina naj bi spoh naletela na plodna tla v obdobju večjih družbenih sprememb in v času gospodarskih kriz.

ODLOČITEV ZA ALTERNATIVNO MEDICINO

Kljub zgoraj začrtanim največkrat omenjenim razlogom za vse večjo uveljavitev alternativne medicine v svetu in pri nas pa še vedno ostaja odprto vprašanje, kako je z uporabo alternativne medicine v primeru posameznika; kakšni so njegovi osebni motivi, ki so ga pripeljali do tega, da se je začel zdraviti s pomočjo alternativne medicine. Na zastavljeno vprašanje bom skušala odgovoriti na podlagi sklepov, do katerih sem prišla na podlagi terenskega dela in opravljene ankete v Ljubljani v letih 1994 in 1995. Pogovarjala sem se z dvajsetimi osebami iz Ljubljane, ki so se v času raziskave ali kdaj prej zdravile s pomočjo alternativne medicine, izkušnje z njo oziroma uspehi zdravljenja pa so bili zelo različni. Med drugim me je v razgovorih s sogovorniki zanimalo, zakaj so se odločili za zdravljenje s pomočjo alternativne medicine. Da bi v raziskavo lahko vključila večje število ljudi, sem s pomočjo šestih v Ljubljani delujočih zdraviteljev izvedla anketo med stopetnajstimi njihovimi zdravljenci. Tudi v anketi so zdravljenci med drugim odgovarjali na vprašanje, zakaj so se odločili za alternativno medicino.

Med informatorji-zdravljenci in anketiranci sem zasledila različne razloge, ki so jih pripeljali do tega, da so iskali pomoč pri zdraviteljih. Ko gre za prvo srečanje z alternativno medicino, so med uporabniki predvsem pragmatiki. Običajno ne razmišljajo o tem, kaj jim pri uradni medicini ni všeč. Glede na to, da z alternativno medicino nimajo nobenih osebnih izkušenj, je ne morejo primerjati z uradno medicino. Največkrat je osrednji motiv le želja, da bi s pomočjo alternativne medicine rešili svoj zdravstveni problem, ki je največkrat kronične narave, pri čemer pa sploh ni nujno, da se povsem odrečejo uradni medicini. Glede na izkušnje, ki jih dobijo ob prvem stiku z alternativno medicino, se potem zanjo odločajo še naprej ali pa tovrstno zdravljenje opustijo. Nezadovoljstvo s prvim poskusom alternativnega zdravljenja ne vodi nujno v opustitev takega zdravljenja. Večina ljudi, ki poskušajo razne možnosti za ozdravitev, je dokaj visoko motiviranih, zato kljub morebitnim začetnim neuspehom iščejo še nove možnosti, druge metode in druge zdravitelje. Med mojimi informatorji je bila le ena oseba, ki je potem, ko je obupala nad uradno medicino, po več letih opustila tudi iskanje alternativnih možnosti.

Med zdravljenci srečamo poleg kroničnih bolnikov tiste,

ki jih je uradna medicina odpisala in jim priznala, da gre njihovo življenje h koncu. Pogosto gre tudi za primere, ko je uradna medicina zdravstveni problem sicer rešila, kolikor je pač bilo v njeni moči, vendar pa pacient sam s svojim zdravstvenim stanjem ni bil zadovoljen in ga je hotel še bolj izboljšati. V nekaterih primerih je uradna medicina postavila diagnozo, ni pa mogla odkriti vzroka bolezni ali pa je šlo za stanja, ko se je nekdo počutil bolnega, z vidika uradne medicine pa je bil povsem zdrav.

Hoteli so mi operirati kolk, pa so ugotovili, da imam kostne-ga raka. Izkazalo se je, da so žarišča tudi že drugod in so me poslali domov umret. Živel naj bi le še približno dva meseca. To je bilo pred petimi leti. Potem me je začel zdraviti gospod G. in kot vidite, sem še živ.

K alternativni medicini se ljudje zatečejo v skrajni sili, potem ko imajo že vsega dovolj oziroma ko so pripravljeni storiti karkoli, le da bi se jim zdravstveno stanje izboljšalo. K njej se včasih zatekajo tudi tisti, ki so že izgubili vsako upanje in tudi na alternativno medicino nič ne dajo. K njej pridejo le zaradi pritiska okolice, da bi izpolnili zahtevo bližnjih, čeprav sami v izboljšanje svojega stanja ne verjamejo več.

Jaz bi tudi gada požrl, samo da bi bilo bolje.

Hčeri, ki je pritiskala name, sem dala obljubo, da bom šla k bioenergetičarki. Ko je prišel tisti datum, ko sva se zmenili, sem morala iti. .../V bistvu sem si mislila, pa naj bo. .../ Popolnoma nič nisem na te stvari dala. Alternativno sem povsem negirala. Zdelo se mi je, da niti člankov o tem ne smem brati, ker jaz sem vendar del medicine.

V nekaterih primerih bi se zdravniki s pomočjo alternativne medicine radi izognili neprijetnim posegom v telo, ki so lahko del uradne medicinske prakse. Tukaj gre lahko tako za razne preiskave, ki so neprijetne oziroma boleče, kot tudi za razne operativne posege. S pomočjo alternativne medicine skušajo omiliti posledice medicinskih posegov, za katere je znano, da lahko imajo negativne stranske učinke, ali pa se obrnejo na zdravitelja že pred tovrstnimi posegi, da bi jih "bolje prenesli". Lahko gre tudi za izogibanje uporabi raznih kemičnih zdravil ali za odpravljanje stranskih učinkov, ki naj bi jih zdravila že povzročila. Nekateri zdravniki so se odločili za bolj "zdrave in naravne" načine zdravljenja. Številni so uporabljali alternativne metode zdravljenja hkrati z metodami uradne medicine, ker se jim je zdelo, da bo tako zdravljenje hitrejše, uspehi pa boljši.

Zdravniki želijo včasih pri zdravitelju le preveriti diagnozo, ki jo je postavila uradna medicina oziroma slišati še mnenje zdravitelja o svojih težavah. Nekateri gredo k zdravitelju, ker preprosto neradi hodijo k zdravniku. Neprijetne so jim čakalnice, polne ljudi, neprijetno jim je soočanje z zdravnikom, ki mu nekako ne zaupajo povsem; strah jih je, da bo zdravnik pri njih odkril kakšno večjo težavo in bojijo se posledic. Nekateri imajo z zdravniki in uradno medicino slabe izkušnje in, če se le da, se jim raje izognejo.

K zdravitelju nekateri gredo preventivno, da bi preverili svoje zdravstveno stanje na ravneh, ki jih uradna medicina ne zaznava. Ker se fizično počutijo zdrave, pač ne morejo iti k zdravniku in reči: "Meni sicer nič ni, ampak prosim, da me vsceno pogledate." Včasih je alternativna medicina tudi

tisto, kar naredijo v življenju "zase", kar si privoščijo za svoje boljše počutje oziroma naredijo za "svojo dušo". Tudi gola radovednost je lahko zadosten razlog za obisk pri zdravitelju. Danes se toliko govori in piše o tem, da se ljudje potem vprašajo, zakaj ne bi tega preizkusili, še posebej kadar se ne morejo odločiti, če bi vsem tem zgodbam verjeli. V takih primerih navajajo kot razlog za obisk pri zdravitelju morebitne manjše probleme, ki jim sicer v življenju ne povzročajo večjih težav, vsaj navidezni razlog pa pač morajo imeti.

Začelo se je povsem iznenada, iz radovednosti. Neka znanka, povsem leva, komaj da sem jo poznala, mi je povedala za M. V bistvu me je bolj kot moja sama bolezen firbec matral, zakaj je njo cela zadeva tako fascinirala. .../ Izgovor mi je bilo izpadanje las.

Za alternativno medicino se odločajo ljudje, za katere bi lahko rekli, da tudi sicer žive bolj "alternativno", se ne podrejajo družbenim normam in okusu množice, temveč iščejo neko svojo pot. Gre za ljudi, ki se zanimajo za duhovnost, za duhovne vidike življenja, pri čemer lahko alternativna medicina predstavlja eno od poti duhovnega razvoja. Običajno gre tudi za poglede na življenje in zdravje, ki odstopajo od ustaljenih predstav. Med tovrstnimi zdravniki je tudi največ možnosti, da srečamo "ideološke" uporabnike, torej tiste, ki zavračajo uradno medicino, se zdravijo le s pomočjo alternativne medicine in so se ji pripravljene popolnoma prepustiti. Vendar pa se zdi, da je "ideoloških" uporabnikov alternativne medicine pri nas razmeroma malo.

Stvar je zelo zanimiva. Mene je v bistvu pot k alternativni vodila nekje ob pubertete naprej ali pa še malo prej. Začelo se je s prebrano. Grozno zgodaj se mi je uprlo meso, nikoli ga nisem marala. .../ Začelo se je z drugačno prebrano v gimnaziji, z odklikom od tega klasičnega pojmovanja zdravja in vseh teh stvari, začela sem teoretično spoznavati te stvari in nekoliko bolj celovito gledati in razmišljati, kaj lahko sam storiš za svoje zdravje. Bila sem tudi na tečajih, pri šestnajstih sem bila na tečaju transcedentalne meditacije.

Za alternativne metode zdravljenja se odrasli največkrat odločajo sami ali po posvetu z bližnjo okolico. Pobudniki so lahko partnerji, sorodniki, prijatelji, sodelavci in znanci. V nekaj primerih so odrasli otroci, ki so že imeli izkušnje z alternativno medicino, nagovorili svoje sprva nezaupljive starše, naj poskusijo tudi sami. Pri mladoletnih otrokih so bili starši tisti, ki so jih peljali k zdravitelju. Opazila sem, da se naklonjenost staršev do alternativne medicine prenaša tudi na otroke. V družinah, kjer se starši, predvsem matere, zdravijo s pomočjo alternativne medicine, je to nekaj samoumevnega tudi za otroke. Kakšen bo odnos teh otrok do uradne in alternativne medicine, ko bodo odrasli in se bodo sami odločali za načine zdravljenja, pa še ne vemo. O zdravju in ukrepih v zvezi s tem se dostikrat pogovarjajo v okviru družine. Glede uporabe alternativne medicine sem ugotovila, da ni vedno nujno doseženo družinsko soglasje. Običajno so ženske tiste, ki več razmišljajo in ukrepajo v tej smeri. Če so možje povsem proti, opravijo določene stvari na skrivaj ali šele kasneje o tem obvestijo moža. Pred leti je bila alternativna medicina in izkušnje z njo za marsikoga predmet zaupnih pogovorov, danes pa večina ljudi govori o tem povsem odprto. Sicer pa nekateri pravijo, da začitijo,

komu lahko o tem govorijo in komu ne.

Mož je kar znorel, ko je slišal, kam sem šla.

Najprej je bil mož izredno proti, samo jaz sem kar gnala svoje. Pa vsi so se norca delali, pa tako naprej. Tak je bil, zdaj pa včasih še sam navija zanjo. Vidi, da je to sprememba. Počasi spet postajaš normalen. Sam je rekel, da ne bo hodil k njej, dokler je živ.

To je bila tretja seansa in otrok je že lahko odložil bergle. To je bil zame čudež, vendar o tem še nekaj časa nisem smela govoriti. Če bi takrat, pred desetimi leti, o tem govorila, bi me imela okolica za malo premaknjeno.

Ljudje, ki se začnejo zdraviti s pomočjo alternativne medicine, imajo lahko o tem določeno znanje, ali pa ga sploh nimajo. Tisti, ki ga nimajo, se pač prepustijo zdravitelju in sledijo njegovim navodilom. Pogosto ne vedo, kaj se zares dogaja, zanima jih le učinek - uspeh zdravljenja. Res pa je, da se številnim zdravljencem v času zdravljenja poveča njihovo zanimanje za alternativno medicino. Začnejo prebirati knjige in razne članke ter hoditi na predavanja in delavnice. Drugi spet se lotijo zadeve z druge strani. Najprej preštudirajo vso možno literaturo in se šele na podlagi poznavanja stvari odločijo za alternativno zdravljenje. Med zdravljenci srečamo tako tiste, ki so pričakovali določene rezultate, kot tiste, ki so bili precej nezaupljivi. Nekateri so med zdravljenjem svoje mnenje spremenili, bodisi da so bili razočarani ali pa so presenečeni ugotovili, da nekaj vendarle je na alternativni medicini. Srečanje z alternativno medicino je za nekatere le bežno ali občasno, lahko pa tudi bistveno vpliva na nadaljnji način življenja posameznika.

V teh ozirih sem bil popoln analfabet, nisem imel nobene potrebe niti nič. Zdaj preberem več o tem, v glavnem v Auri in Nedeljskem dnevniku.

In kdo so najpogostejši uporabniki alternativne medicine? Rezultati moje raziskave se v marsičem ujemajo z rezultati drugih tovrstnih raziskav, ki kažejo na to, da med uporabniki alternativne medicine prevladujejo ženske. Vendar pa je znano, da se ženske tudi sicer bolj posvečajo zdravstvenemu varstvu in tudi k zdravnikom hodijo bolj pogosto kot moški, ker so bolj podvržene raznim kroničnim težavam (Sharma 1992: 22). Tudi moji sogovorniki zdravitelji so ugotavljali, da med njihovimi zdravljenci prevladujejo ženske, razlog za to pa vidijo poleg že omenjenega tudi v dejstvu, da so ženske v primerjavi z moškimi bolj odprte za duhovnost, mističnost in nove stvari.

Pribaja več žensk. So bolj odprte in niso tako kot večina moških, vkalupljene v neke sisteme. Za duhovnost so bolj odprte, moški pa so bolj materialno usmerjeni.

Tudi rezultati ankete kažejo na številčno premoč žensk. Kar zadeva starost, je bilo največ zdravljencev iz starostne skupine od 41 do 50 let, sledili sta starostna skupina od 31 do 40 let in od 21 do 30 let. Kaže, da se najredkeje zdravijo s pomočjo alternativne medicine osebe do desetega leta starosti in osebe nad 71 let. Tudi drugi raziskovalci ugotavljajo, da je med uporabniki alternativne medicine malo zelo mladih in zelo starih oseb. Kar zadeva zdravljenje zelo mladih, sem med sogovorniki slišala mnenja, da nekatere metode zdravljenja niso primerne za majhne otroke, ker med terapijo ne morejo biti dolgo pri miru. Pri zdravljenju

z alternativno medicino je lahko tudi določena stopnja tveganja, starši pa v večini primerov niso pripravljene eksperimentirati z zdravjem svojih otrok. Med mladimi so tudi redkeje kronične težave, zaradi katerih se ljudje najpogosteje zatekajo k alternativni medicini (Sharma 1992: 22). Starejši ljudje pa verjetno vzamejo bolezen v zakup, saj nekako sodi v obdobje njihovega življenja. Zdi se, da se k alternativni medicini zatekajo predvsem ljudje, ki so v "aktivnem" delu svojega življenja in je (kronična) bolezen moteča pri njihovem vsakdanjem življenju in delu.

Evropske raziskave kažejo na to, da med uporabniki alternativne medicine prevladujejo bolj plačani in bolj izobraženi ljudje (Sharma 1992: 19). Po nekaterih ocenah naj bi se v Sloveniji za alternativno medicino odločala predvsem srednji in višji sloj prebivalstva (Rudolf 1989: 141). Finančnega stanja anketiranih zdravljencev sicer nisem ugotavljala, zanimala pa me je njihova izobrazbena struktura. Med anketiranci je bilo največ oseb, ki so končale štiritletno srednjo šolo, in oseb, ki so končale študij na visokih šolah oziroma akademijah ter višjih šolah.

SKLEP

Veliko je razlogov, s katerimi lahko utemeljimo oziroma opravičujemo vse večjo razširjenost alternativne medicine v svetu in pri nas. Ko potem v literaturi največkrat omenjene razloge, kot so npr. kritika znanosti in medicine, "vračanje k naravi" ipd. primerjamo s konkretnimi razlogi, ki so pripeljali posameznika do uporabe alternativne medicine, pride včasih do razhajanj. Na ravni posameznika lahko ugotovimo, da se večina ljudi odloča za alternativno medicino in zdravitelje predvsem z namenom, da bi izboljšali svoje zdravstveno stanje. V pričujočem prispevku sicer govorim o zdravljencih iz Ljubljane in njihovih razlogih za uporabo alternativne medicine, vendar bi verjetno prišli do podobnih sklepov tudi v drugih krajih. Potem, ko je o bolezni in zdravju najprej odločal bog in za njim "bog v belem" (beri: zdravnik), se zdi, da daje alternativna medicina zdravljencem občutek, da "imajo zdravje v svojih rokah", saj se lahko po lastni presoji odločajo za različne zdravitelje in alternativne metode zdravljenja. Med uporabniki alternativne medicine je največ oseb, ki so v aktivnem obdobju življenja in imajo kronične zdravstvene težave. Žensk je več kot moških. Alternativna medicina je načelno dostopna vsem, ker pa temelji na samoplačništvu, zahteva tudi primerno finančno situiranost.

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Summary

**"IF IT MADE ME FEEL BETTER, I WOULD DEVOUR EVEN A VIPER!"
ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE AND THE HEALED IN LJUBLJANA.**

Nena Židov

Around the world as well as in Slovenia alternative medicine gained more widespread recognition in the last three or two decades. Even though it is labelled alternative, this form of healing often goes hand in hand with official medicine. Due to its broader context - it appeared in economically more developed countries first - it seems unsuitable to equal it to folk medicine. Among most often quoted reasons for its advancement we should mention critical evaluations of official medicine and patients' appeal for a different relationship between doctor and patient. Alternative medicine fills in the gaps left by official medicine. It originated when health became a special commodity and a need to return to nature and the "natural way of healing" arose, and new ideas about healing originating in esoteric traditions and eastern healing systems appeared.

Based on the research of the healed in Ljubljana in 1994 and 1995 we can conclude that alternative medicine on the level of an individual does meet certain man's needs. The first reason why people turn to healers is undoubtedly a wish to get better, be it because they were not satisfied with the results of official medicine, or even because it termed them incurable. Often they are treated by official medicine physicians and alternative medicine healers at the same time. Among the less frequent reasons mentioned during the course of research were curiosity, pressure of others, prevention, the need to check the diagnosis of official medicine, avoiding unpleasant treatments of official medicine, certain doctors, or pharmaceuticals. Alternative medicine can be tied to an interest in spirituality and an alternative way of life. An individual can encounter it only briefly, or it can significantly affect his life-style afterwards. It is believed that women are more prone to embrace alternative medicine than men. It is most often used by people between 40 to 51 and those with high school, college or university degrees.

Nena Židov

"I WOULD EVEN SWALLOW AN ADDER IF IT HELPED ME TO GET BETTER"

THE TREATED AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE IN LJUBLJANA

TERMINOLOGY

I associate the term alternative medicine with various preventive, diagnostic, therapeutic and rehabilitation approaches which spread in Slovenia, as well as in other countries (at first particularly in the developed ones), in the last twenty to thirty years and are not a part of the official medical practice. Sources of alternative therapies can be very different. The performers of alternative therapies have not as a rule acquired their knowledge in the officially organi-

zed educational system in Slovenia. I do not see alternative medicine as a medical system that would on principle be against cooperation with official medicine. The term alternative medicine could easily be substituted with the term complementary medicine, the latter indicating the possibility of cooperation between the two medical systems. And yet I decided to use the former one, for it is at present the most frequently used term in Slovenia to denote the phenomena which are the subject of this contribution. Some authors speak of alternative medicine when people use it

independently, and of complementary medicine when they are treated by alternative medicine and the official one at the same time (Penkala-Gawecka 1991: 43). There are also authors who use the terms alternative medicine and complementary medicine as synonyms (Sharma 1992; 1993). Slovene doctors are trying to establish the term unconventional medicine (Rožman 1993).

According to some authors-ethnologists alternative medicine is a contemporary variety of folk medicine (Motyčková 1992; Wiegelmann 1987), while others separate them (Penkala-Gawecka 1995). I myself prefer the latter idea, particularly because of the fact that contemporary alternative medicine, although containing some methods of folk medicine, functions in a completely different context. People use it for reasons other than those for which they used folk medicine and there are also differences in economic and ideological foundations. When using the term alternative medicine we must always consider a definite place and time. The same method of treatment can have a completely different status in a different time and place. Let us take the case of acupuncture, which is a part of traditional medicine in China. In Europe it first acquired the status of an alternative method of treatment, but is nowadays accepted into the frames of official medicine in most of the countries.

While in the system of official medicine the performer and the user are labelled by the terms *doctor* and *patient*, I use the term *healer* for the performer and *the treated* for the user when dealing with alternative medicine. A healer is therefore a person who uses the methods of alternative medicine to treat people, while the treated is a person who turns to a healer for certain medical problems or, as we will see later, also for other reasons. Alternative medicine comprises also various kinds of self-treatment, but in this contribution I am primarily interested in the reasons for which people decide to visit a healer.

REASONS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE

Research done in Europe, North America and Australia indicate the growing importance of alternative medicine (Rožman 1993: 497). In America, for instance, it started to occur in the 60s (Grossinger 1990: 332) and in Britain around 1970 (Sharma 1993: 15). In Germany alternative medicine started to gain ground in the end of the 70s and in the beginning of the 80s (Wiegelmann 1987: 8-9). The beginnings of alternative medicine in Slovenia go back to the 70s, but it was established in the end of the 80s and in the beginning of the 90s. I would like to mention herbalism, bioenergy, qi gong, reiki, homeopathy, crystallotherapy, aromatherapy, iridology, various manipulative therapies and massages, and various diets as the most wide-spread methods of contemporary alternative medicine in Slovenia.

There are several reasons for the growing popularity of alternative medicine. Some seem to be rational, others do not. But it is very interesting that on the world's level alternative medicine first started to appear in the economically highly developed societies where the public health system was well organized. Among the most frequently mentioned reasons for the growing popularity of alternative medicine there is by all means the critique of science and of medicine in particular (Letica 1989: 215). People seem to have lost the faith in the almightiness of official medicine and started

to become aware of the negative side effects of the medicines produced by pharmaceutical industry. In the middle of the 70s Ivan Ilič set the thesis that the damage caused by medicine is greater than its benefit (Ilič 1976: 17). The social position of a doctor, a little "god in white", has changed just as patients have changed. They are more knowledgeable and their self-confidence is growing. Not everything that a doctor says is sacred to them any longer. They want to participate actively in their treatment and have more active relations with people who treat them. Besides that they also want to have more say in choosing the methods of treatment (Sharma 1993: 17).

Health became an important value. An individual's health is also in the interest of the society. Because of the demand for higher and higher productiveness the importance of health seems to have increased particularly in the civic societies (Will 1990: 50). Alternative medicine seems to be connected with the wish for the "return to nature". The new methods of treatment are very attractive due to the new mythology in which they wrap nature and health. Having a personal healer besides one's GP seems to be fashionable and even indicates one's social prestige (Marković 1987: 11).

It was in the 60s when eastern philosophies and religion started to be introduced in the West, which resulted in the growing interest for the eastern methods of treatment (Boh 1989: 112). In the 70s the industrially highly developed countries were the ground where youth alternative movements sprang. They were strongly against the life and production forms of the existing society. They were also critical towards official medicine and strove for the revival of folk medicine. Later their influence reached other social strata as well. In the 80s it was the New Age movement which brought new views of health. Important influences upon these views started to come from the esoteric tradition (Wiegelmann 1987: 6-9).

The media have an important, according to some people quite a decisive role in the formation of new views of health, illness and treatment. There are some changes in health care thanks to the WHO, which in 1987 advised its members to include the local traditional medical systems in the project *Health for All by the Year 2000* and assess them scientifically at the same time (Rožman 1993: 479). According to some people's opinion alternative medicine reflects the human need for the irrational, the emotional, religion and magic (Rožman 1993: 480). A part of the specifically Slovene circumstances was the poor state of economy in the time of the growth of alternative medicine in our country. The financial crisis was one of the reasons for lower salaries in doctors and poorer quality of health service (Letica 1989: 223). Alternative medicine seems to flourish in period of larger social changes and in times of economic crises.

DECISION FOR ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE

In spite of the above discussed most frequently mentioned reasons for a firmer and firmer establishment of alternative medicine in the world, the question about the use of alternative medicine in the case of an individual - what personal motives led him to seek help in alternative medicine - still remains an open one. I will try to answer this question on the basis of conclusions which I reached by field work and a survey in Ljubljana in 1994 and 1995. I talked with twenty

persons from Ljubljana who were treated by alternative medicine either during my research or before it. Their experiences with the alternative medicine or the results of treatment being very different. In the conversations with my informants I was also interested in why they decided to be treated by alternative medicine. Helped by six healers working in Ljubljana I carried out a survey among 115 persons treated by them in order to include a larger number of people into my research. One of the questions in the survey asked the treated why they had decided for alternative medicine.

I found out various reasons which led my informants - the treated and the survey answerers to seek help with the healers. In first encounters with alternative medicine most of its users are pragmatics. They usually don't think about what they don't like in official medicine. Since they haven't had any personal experiences with alternative medicine yet, they cannot compare it with official medicine. In most of the cases the main motive is a wish to be helped by alternative medicine to solve their medical problem which is very often of chronic nature. All this does not mean that they refuse official medicine. According to their experience gained in the first contact with alternative medicine they either keep deciding for it or give up that kind of treatment. Discontent with the first try of alternative treatment does not necessarily lead into abandoning that kind of treatment. The majority of people who try various possibilities for convalescence are quite highly motivated and in spite of the eventual initial failures they look for new possibilities, other methods and other healers. There was only one person among my informants who despaired of official medicine, and after several years quitted searching for alternative possibilities, too.

Besides chronic patients people treated by alternative medicine are also those who were written off by official medicine and told that they were dying. In a number of cases the official medicine had actually cured the patient as much as it could, but he was not quite satisfied with the state of his health and wanted to improve it even further. There are also cases in which official medicine diagnosed, but could not find out the cause of an illness; or when someone felt ill, but seemed to be in good health in the view of official medicine.

I was to be operated on my hip when they found out that I had bone cancer. It proved that there were several other metastases elsewhere and I was sent home to die. I was told that I had only two months left. That was five years ago. Then Mr. G. started to treat me and as you can see I'm still alive.

People turn to alternative medicine in the last resort, when they are fed up with everything or are ready to do anything if only their health improved. Sometimes even those who have given up every hope and otherwise set no value upon alternative medicine eventually turn to it. They do it because of the pressure from their relatives and friends, to satisfy their wishes, although they themselves do not believe in the improvement of their state any longer.

I would even swallow an adder if it helped me to get better.

I promised my daughter, who was putting pressure on me, to visit a bioenergetic. When the agreed day arrived,

I just had to go. [...] Actually, I thought, let it be. [...] I regarded all these things worthless. I completely denied alternative medicine. I felt I shouldn't even read articles about it, for I myself am a part of official medicine.

In some cases the treated use alternative medicine because they would like to avoid the unpleasant or painful examinations or even operations which are a part of the official medical practice. Alternative medicine should help to alleviate their consequences for it is well known that some examinations, operations etc. can have negative side effects. Sometimes people turn to a healer before operations in order to "stand them better". Another reason can be that they would like to avoid using chemical medicines or treat the side effects already caused by them. Some people have simply decided for "healthier and more natural ways of treatment". Several have used alternative methods of treatment simultaneously with the methods of official medicine because they thought that in that way the treatment would be quicker and the results better.

Sometimes the treated only want to check the diagnosis by official medicine or hear a second opinion on their problems from a healer. Some turn to a healer simply because they don't like visiting doctors. They feel uncomfortable in the waiting-rooms full of people, they feel uncomfortable when confronting a doctor whom they do somehow not trust completely; they fear that the doctor will find some more serious problem and are afraid of the consequences. Some people have rather unpleasant experiences with doctors and official medicine and try to avoid them whenever possible.

Some turn to a healer preventively in order to check their health on the levels which are not perceived by official medicine. Since they feel physically in good condition, they cannot really visit a doctor and say: "Well, I am all right, but could you please examine me anyway?" Sometimes alternative medicine is what people do for "themselves", what they treat themselves for a better state of health or do for "their own soul". Even sheer curiosity can be enough to visit a healer. There is so much talking and writing about these things nowadays, so why shouldn't one try it, especially when one cannot decide whether to believe all these stories or not. In such cases people bring forward the potential minor problems which do not bother them very much; they just need some kind of a reason for their visit to a healer.

It started unexpectedly, out of curiosity. An acquaintance whom I hardly knew told me about M. To be frank, I was not as much bothered by the illness itself as by the curiosity why on earth she was so fascinated by the whole thing. [...] My pretext was the thinning of my hair.

We can say that people who decide for alternative medicine are those who live in the "alternative way" anyway - they are not subordinated to the social norms and to the taste of the masses, but are trying to find their own way. They are interested in spirituality, in spiritual views of life in which alternative medicine can represent one of the ways of spiritual development. Usually it is also about the views of life and health which deviate from the established notions. It is among these people that we are most likely to meet the "ideological" users, therefore those who repudiate official medicine, are treated only by alternative medicine and are ready to completely leave themselves to it. But it seems that "ideological" users of alternative medicine are not numerous in Slovenia.

It is very interesting. My way to alternative medicine actually started somewhere in adolescence, or a bit earlier. It started with diet. It was very early that I became repulsed by meat, I never liked it. [...] It started with a different diet in high school, with a deviation from the classic perception of health and all these things, I started to learn about these things theoretically and think more globally about what you yourself can do for your health. I also attended some courses; at the age of 16 I attended the course of transcendental meditation.

Adults mostly decide for alternative methods of treatment either by themselves or after consulting a close circle of people. The prime movers may be their partners, relatives, friends, co-workers and acquaintances. There are some cases in which the grown-up children who had already had some experience with alternative medicine, persuaded their doubtful parents to try it themselves. In minor children it was their parents who brought them to the healer. I noticed that the parents' favour of alternative medicine also spreads on to their children. In the families where the parents, particularly mothers, are treated by alternative medicine this also proves to be something natural for the children. But we do not know yet what relation towards official and alternative medicine these children will develop when they grow up and start deciding about the ways of treatment by themselves. They very often discuss health and the related measures within the families. As regards the use of alternative medicine I found out that not the whole family is always agreeable to it. It is usually the women who think more and first take steps in this direction. If their husbands disagree completely, their wives do certain things by stealth or only later inform their husbands. Years ago alternative medicine and the experience with it was a subject of intimate conversations for many people, while nowadays the majority talks about it quite openly. However, some say that they feel who they can talk to about this matter and who not.

My husband got furious when he heard where I had gone.

At first my husband was very much against it, but I just stuck to my conviction. And they were all poking fun at me and so on. That's what he was like, but now it even happens that he supports it himself. He can see the change. Slowly you're getting normal again. But he said he himself'd never visit her as long as he lived.

That was the third seance and the child could already put off the crutches. It was a miracle, but I could not speak about it for quite some time. If I had spoken about it at that time - ten years ago - people would have thought I was up the pole.

People who start to be treated by alternative medicine may have some knowledge about it or are completely ignorant about the matter. The latter just give themselves up to the healer and follow his instructions. They often don't even know what is going on and are only interested in the result - the success of treatment. But it is true that during their treatment several people develop the interest for alternative medicine. They start reading books and various articles or attending the lectures and workshops. Others, again, undertake the whole thing in a different way. First they study a heap of books on the matter and decide for alternative treatment only when they have acquired more knowledge about it. Among the treated we can find those who expected

certain results as well as the more skeptic ones. There are also some who changed their opinion during the treatment; either that they were disappointed or that they were surprised by finding that there must be something in alternative medicine after all. The contact with alternative medicine may for some people be only brief or temporary, but it can also exert an essential influence on an individual's subsequent way of life.

I was a complete analphabet in these regards, I didn't have any need or nothing. Now I read more about it, mostly in Aura and Nedeljski dnevnik.

And who are the most frequent users of alternative medicine? The results of my research agree to a high degree with the results of other researches of this kind which show that there are mostly women who use alternative medicine. But it is well-known that women take more care for health protection anyway and visit doctors more often than men, for they are more subject to chronic troubles (Sharma 1992: 22). My informants - the healers, too ascertained that women prevailed among their patients, and that the reason for that, besides the above mentioned one, was the fact that women, as compared to men, are more open to spirituality, mysticism and new things.

It's mostly women who come. They're more open and not so moulded into some systems as the majority of men. They're more open to spirituality while men are more materially oriented.

The results of the survey indicate numerical superiority of women. As far as age is concerned the majority of treated people belonged to the age group of 41 to 50 years, followed by the age groups of 31 to 40 and of 21 to 30 years. It seems that children under ten and adults over 71 years old are persons who are most rarely treated by alternative medicine. Other researches too state that there are only few very young and very old people among the users of alternative medicine. As for the treatment of the very young, some of my informants thought that certain methods of treatment are not suitable for young children, for they cannot be still during the therapy. There can also be a certain degree of risk in alternative treatment, and in most cases the parents do not want to experiment with their children's health. Apart from that, the young have less chronic troubles which are often the reason for people to turn to alternative medicine (Sharma 1992: 22). And the older probably reconcile themselves to illness, for it somehow belongs to that part of life. It seems that the users of alternative medicine are mostly people who are in the "active" part of their lives and for whom a (chronic) disease is very disturbing in their everyday life and work.

European studies indicate that the better paid and better educated people prevail among the users of alternative medicine (Sharma 1992: 19). According to some esteems there are particularly people from middle to higher class who decide for alternative medicine in Slovenia (Rudolf 1989: 141). Though I did not attempt to find out the financial state of the treated who answered my questionnaire, I was interested in their educational structure. Most of the people surveyed finished a secondary school and several had higher education.

CONCLUSION

There are several reasons with which to ground or excuse the spread of alternative medicine in the world. It sometimes doesn't really seem clear when the reasons most often mentioned in books, such as the critique of science and medicine, "returning to nature" and the like are compared to the concrete reasons which led an individual to the use of alternative medicine. On the level of an individual we can find out that the majority of people turn to alternative medicine and the healers primarily with the purpose of improving their state of health. Although my contribution speaks about the treated people from Ljubljana and their reasons for the use of alternative medicine, I would probably come to similar conclusions in other places. First it was only God and after that a "god in white" (a physician) who decided about illness and health. Now it seems that alternative medicine makes the treated people feel that they can now decide about their health themselves, because they can actually choose between several healers and alternative methods of treatment. Most of the users of alternative medicine are in the active part of their lives and have chronic problems with their health. There are more women than men. In principle alternative medicine is accessible to everyone, but since it has to be paid by an individual it also demands a suitable financial situation.

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