

Corruption in Croatian health care. 1st edition

Gorjanski D, editor and associates Gajski L, Škaričić N, Sladoljev S, Marušić M, Osijek (Croatia): Fond Hipokrat – Zaklada Slagalice; 2010. 309 pages; ISBN 978-953-56131-0-7; price: kn 110.00

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Field of medicine: social medicine, deontology.

Format: Paperback monograph.

Audience: Undergraduate and postgraduate students of medicine, general practitioners, specialists in all specializations, teachers at Schools of Medicine, and journalists who would like to understand current policies in the health care services. Also it could be a helpful tool to policy makers and users of health care services and particularly for basic research in the field of social medicine, health care policy.

Purpose: To fill the gap in literature on corruption in the health care system – a

major and frequent late complication of privatization in the Croatian health care system, characterized by signs of destruction of the existing health care system. The final result of this phenomenon will be the decreased survival of patients whose money, collected in health care funds on the basis of the solidarity of all citizens for the sick, goes astray and ends up in the pockets of individuals and small groups. The book provides a reference that will be valid in many settings, including teaching about corruption in medical schools and colleges. It will be helpful in the process of reestablishing the integrity of the health care system, in the process of establishing non-profit principles, a publicly available operating system, in the separation of public and private health care, in the creation of the legal preconditions for fighting corruption in the health care sector, relieve the health system from politicization, and the implementation of easily accessible medical services, in applying the medical Code of Ethics in everyday life, and in converting corruption from a conspiracy of silence to a public issue for all citizens.

Content: Corruption in the Croatian health sector is seen in the legalization of unnecessary costs that allow immoral (but legal) enrichment of small groups or individuals in the health care system, generated by the theft of patients' money, and is found in the majority of Croatian health institutions. Corruption as a phenomenon of the health care system is associated with irregularities in the way in which some parts of the system operate, failing to fulfill their main mission, and so destroy the system itself.

Corruption in the health care system behaves like an organic malignant disease. Using again the same image of malignant behavior – part of the system (malignant cells) does not perform the work for which it was intended, and so destroys the entire body (the host). This book is divided into 11 sections: Introductory knowledge, Corruption in health care systems, Further findings on corruption in health care, The corrupt behavior of patients, Consequences of corruption in health care, Combating corruption, Matko Marušić: My story, Supplement, Index, Literature and About the authors. The first seven sections consist of several parts. The first section, entitled “Introductory knowledge,” comprehensively explores general aspects about corruption, general aspects of health care systems, the appearance of negative objectives in profitable health care systems. This section also includes consideration of the nature of non-profit health care systems, then about conflicts of interests in the Croatian health care system, about those who fight against corruption, and finally about most frequent nonsense about health care systems. The second section is entitled “Corruption in Health Care Systems.” This section focuses on corruption as an illness of the system, comparing it with an organic malignant disease. Corruption is described as a misunderstanding of the archetypal role of medicos, as a misunderstanding of their social role, as the collapse of the ideology of a profitable health care system. This section provides chapters that will be an especially relevant and helpful resource for physicians who treat patients, emphasizing the importance of the recently developed profitable criteria for organizing the Croatian health care system, the separation of pharmaceutical production from the system, separation of other organizing units from the health system, the networking of the health system with private medical practices. Also the consequences of a corruptive

health care system and solutions for the difficulties produced by the corruptive health system are considered. Further chapters include the behavior of political parties in power, the feudalization (pseudo privatization) of the health care system and the concept of soft corruption in health. Finally in this section other forms of corruption are described: corruption in the patient-doctor relationship, corruption between profitable institutions and organizational groups, corruption between profit institutions and doctors, corruption between suspects of various crimes and doctors, and direct service to groups or individuals in power which is detrimental for citizens. The third section, entitled, “Further findings on corruption in health care”, reveals the most recent knowledge about corruption in schools of medicine, about conflicts of interests in medicine (author Lidija Gajski), about corruption in the privatization of the Immunological Institute (author Srećko Sladoljev) and about corruption in the Croatian health system (author Nataša Škaričić). Lidija Gajski gives readers very important information about achievements in modern pharmacotherapy, about conflicts of interests in medicine in general and particularly about conflicts of interests of patients, journalists, doctors and pharmacists, professionals in all fields, politicians, and institutions. Finally she writes about solving conflicts of interests. Nataša Škaričić gives five stories: about the budget, doctors, patients, politics and about the disciplinary responsibility of doctors and compensation. Therefore, it is obvious that this is of interest to a wide variety of physicians, politicians, patients and citizens, students and their teachers. The fourth part of the book, entitled “Corruptive behavior of patients”, includes an introduction, the basis of corruptive behavior of patients, the objectives of corruptive behavior of patients, corruptive behavior techniques used by patients and the consequences of patients’ corruptive

behavior. The fifth section, entitled "Consequences of corruption in health", describes the final outcomes of health care corruption. This is a very educational part for readers interested in corruption in health and its consequences: impoverishment of the health system, preventing the equal and fair distribution of medical services and goods, stifling the development of private health facilities, and encouraging the development of private health facilities. Furthermore, in this section the detrimental impact on the macro economy, then the negative influence on the motivation and moral of health workers, and the negative influence on the working morals in society as a whole are described. At the end of this section there is a description of how to redirect the goals of the health system and the consequences of the butterfly effect. In the sixth section, ways of combating corruption are described through teaching about corruption in medical schools and faculties, establishing health system integrity, organizing health system on non-profit principles, making the health system a completely public enterprise. There is also a description of how to separate the private and public health systems, creating the regulative preconditions for combating health corruption, relieving the health system from politicization, creating easy access to medical services, implementation in everyday life of the Code of Medical Ethics and finally changing corruption into the public problem of all citizens. There are also stories about specific academic forms of corruption and scandals in the seventh section entitled "Matko Marušić: My story". Matko Marušić tells the story about attacks on the editors of the Croatian Medical Journal (CMJ), the chronology of attacks on CMJ editors, about the trial and attempt at defamation through psychiatric expertise. Also he describes restriction of the freedom of speech to conceal corruption and scandals, and attacks by the management of the Medical Faculty in

Zagreb against the editors of the CMJ. Furthermore he tells the story of dishonorable conduct by the court of honor of the Medical Faculty in Zagreb and attempts by the management of Zagreb Medical Faculty to take over CMJ in 2009. Finally in his notes he underlines that his story was not a testimony of personal suffering, or persecution of certain people but an experience that illustrates the finesse, depth and deleterious effects of academic corruption. Additionally, the book has a Supplement, Index, Literature and About the Authors sections that help readers to read the book more easily. In the supplement, the journalist Nataša Škaričić, has kindly made available to readers the first research project, "KIT-Corruption and Transparency in the health care system of the Republic Croatia", which is a chance to examine the extent of corruption in the Croatian health care systematically.

The list of authors is quite distinguished and includes national experts in the area of corruption in Croatian health: Dr Dražen Gorjanski is an employee of the Croatian Institution for Health Insurance, and he deals with the realization of the rights of patients on the basis of current regulations and supervision of the health system; Dr Lidija Gajski, an internist, is the author of the book "Drugs or a story of deception," who began a new era in thinking about medications and treatment; Nataša Škaričić, journalist, whose name has become a trademark for investigative journalist in Croatian healthcare; Srećko Sladoljev, Ph.D., a courageous and persistent fighter against corruption, despite being exposed to threats of all kinds; and finally professor Matko Marušić, whose story in this book reveals in detail all the horrors through which not only the individual who dares to oppose corruption but also his / her family have to pass.

Highlights and limitations: Giving readers in one place the present state of corruption in postwar Croatia, this book pro-

vides a comprehensive, up-to-date, and relevant resource for a wide range of medical professionals, politicians, patients, students and almost all citizens, by using an interdisciplinary approach to this serious and concerning public problem. The unique feature of this book is that it was not written with the intention of accusing anyone specific for corruption; it was written with the intention of accusing all of us. By presenting the details of known corruptive mechanisms in health systems that lead to the development of the destruction of the national resources for keeping health system sustainable in the future, this book also addresses some possible solutions in combating corruption in the health system that require further investigation, the open engagement of all responsible persons and institutions to stop this negative trend. This is also very interesting for all health systems organizers dealing with this topic in the region of the former Yugoslavia after the catastrophic war from 1991 to 1995. The editor Gorjanski D, and associates Gajski L, Škaričić N, Sladoljev S, Marušić M, are pioneers in the recognition of the multi-disciplinal complexity of this public disease, and have included in writing of this

book a refreshing variety of current and real resources. The book includes contributions with 210 references from different fields of medicine, journalism, and health care policy, which makes it the very first textbook dedicated to corruption in health systems. We may predict that it will find its place in the medical history of deontology and social medicine and have a strong influence on the future understanding of corruption as a public malignant disease. If research into the problem of corruption in health care systems continues to be active in the region, we may expect more brave and dedicated individuals and groups to publish new data and studies, which could update the book with new chapters and, hopefully, we can expect a further edition of this excellent book.

Related reading: Readers interested in corruption in health care systems unfortunately cannot find textbooks dedicated especially to this topic. However, for those who want additional reading, the book “Lijekovi ili priča o obmani,” edited by Gajski L (Pergamena, Zagreb; 2009) is available, along with internet resources about corruption from Transparency International.