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THE PROBLEM OF THE CONTROL OF RHEUMATISM AND

CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASES IN THE UKRAINIAN SSR

- USSR -

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FOREWORD

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THE PROBLEM OF THE CONTROL OF RHEUMATISM AND  
CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASES IN THE UKRAINIAN SSR

Following is a translation of an article by K. M. Sherstnev (Kiev), in Sovetskoye zdravookhraneniye (Soviet Public Health), Vol XIX, No 1, Moscow, 1960, pages 36-40

Editorial comment: The author is associated with the organizational-methodology section of the Ukrainian Scientific Research Institute of Clinical Medicine imeni Academician N. D. Strazhesko (director: Honored Figure of Science, Professor A. L. Mikhnev).

The Ministry of Public Health, Ukrainian SSR, has taken a number of major steps to intensify the scientific-research work on problems of rheumatism and cardiovascular pathology.

A number of scientific-research and medical institutes in the republic have been engaged in scientific investigations on these problems. In recent years there has been a considerable increase in the Ukraine in the number of scientific research projects devoted to the study of various problems of cardiovascular pathology, and the volume of these research projects has broadened. Whereas in 1954, the problem of preventing and treating cardiovascular insufficiency was being developed by 13 institutes where 214 individual topics were planned, by 1957 there were 17 institutes taking part in the study of this problem, and 314 topics were being studied. The principal areas studied were the diagnostics, clinical aspects, and treatment of hypertension, coronary insufficiency, and, to a somewhat lesser degree, myocardial infarction and atherosclerosis. One must note the comparatively small percentage of research works devoted to studying the problems of the etiology and especially the prophylaxis of diseases of the cardiovascular system. Even in the 1958 plan, out of 343 topics, only 14 were devoted to problems of the prophylaxis of cardiac diseases. For example, the Odessa Medical Institute, the Kiev Institute of Medical Refresher Courses, the Stalino Medical Institute, and the Ukrainian Institute of Health-Resort Science did not plan a single topic in 1958 for studying the etiology and prophylaxis of hypertension, atherosclerosis, coronary insufficiency, or of myocardial infarction.

Certain achievements have been obtained in the Ukraine in studying the problems of rheumatism. In 1953 the scientific-research and medical institutes in the republic studied only 29 topics on this problem, but in 1957 there were 17 institutes engaged in the problem "Rheumatism and Ways to Combat it." These institutes were studying 168 topics, chiefly involving problems of the pathogenesis, clinical aspects, and treatment of rheumatism. True, even here one's attention is drawn by the small number of

works devoted to the etiology of rheumatism; in addition, there are almost no works on morphology, and an inadequate number of research works are being carried out on problems of the distribution of rheumatism among individual occupational groups, particularly miners, persons working under excessively hot conditions, in peat bogs, or in agriculture. There is insufficient development of prophylactic measures to prevent rheumatism and its recurrence among various occupational groups and age groups.

The Ukrainian Scientific-Research Institute of Clinical Medicine imeni Academician N. D. Strazhesko, which is the republic's leading institute on this problem, has been engaged, since its founding in 1936, in profound and complete scientific investigations on these problems. The number of scientific investigations has been increasing with each passing year, and the quality of the investigations carried out has also been improving, to a considerable extent. The results of the scientific works that have been carried out are published regularly in the periodical press. Since 1957 the institute, on the basis of the scientific research that has been fulfilled, has issued instructional-methodology letters which are sent, in the amount of tens of thousands of copies, to therapeutic institutions in the republic. Fourteen letters have been published on various problems of practical medicine: the treatment of rheumatism with cortisone and with adrenocorticotrophic hormone; the anesthesia of parturients with diseases of the cardiovascular system; oxygen therapy with diseases of the heart, and the prophylaxis of rheumatism in adults and children; the evaluation of changes in the electrocardiogram in the event of rheumatic affections of the heart; etc. Three methodological letters were published in 1958, and six more are being prepared for publication, including instructions pertaining to dispensary service for patients with diseases of the cardiovascular system, the preparation and conducting of childbirth for persons suffering from mitral defects, the use of antibiotics and oxygen in cases of endocarditis, and a number of others.

Not only the institute associates take part in preparing these letters, but also many professors from Kiev, Odessa, and Dnepropetrovsk. According to the responses of physicians, these letters are a valuable aid to them in their work.

The institute does not limit itself to publishing the works of its associates. At various congresses and conferences, the institute's scientists give reports on the scientific research that they have carried out; not only intra-institute scientific conferences have been held, but also republic-wide conferences attracting scientists from other cities. During the postwar years, the institute has held six republic-wide and eight visiting conferences in oblast's in the republic; these conferences attracted a large number of scientists and medical practitioners.

The Ministry of Public Health, Ukrainian SSR, required the Ukrainian Institute of Clinical Medicine to render constant organizational and methodological assistance to practical public-health agencies in the republic in problems of combatting rheumatism and cardiovascular diseases. This is the second year that the institute has been rendering assistance to practical public-health agencies. In addition

to the instructional-methodology letters, in 1957, 54 physicians from various oblast's of the Ukraine took refresher courses on the job in the institute clinics and laboratories. The institute's scientific workers have held seminars on the prophylaxis and treatment of cardiovascular diseases and rheumatism; these seminars encompassed almost all the district therapists in many rayons of Kiev and in Kiyevo-Svyatoshinskiy Rayon, Kiyevskaya Oblast'. In 1957, scientific workers of the institute were sent to 16 oblast's of the republic, where they held seminars to increase the knowledge of the district and rayon therapists in the field of cardiac pathology, organized and held oblast' therapeutic conferences, and took part in instructing interrupted courses to which therapists in the rayon and rural hospitals and in the districts were called to the oblast' center. In 1958 three visiting conferences on vital problems of internal medicine were organized in Khmel'nitskaya Oblast' for physicians by the scientific forces of the institute.

In 1958 the work on organizing aid to practical public health was considerably expanded. By decree of the director of the institute, in order to improve the specialized, practical-scientific, organizational, and methodological assistance in therapeutic treatment of patients, each associate was assigned a definite oblast' that he must visit periodically.

Prior to 1957 there were no special organizations on the periphery of the republics engaged in studying the causes of diseases of the heart and vessels. In 1957, decree #98 of the Ministry of Public Health USSR proposed the creation of cardiorheumatological laboratories in each oblast' center in major cities. In January 1958, on the basis of the institute, there was organized a republic-wide five-day seminar for directors of oblast' and city cardioheumatological laboratories. Organizational questions concerning the work of those laboratories, and methods and forms of the link between the laboratories and the institute were discussed at the seminar. The methodological and organizational center that the cardioheumatological laboratory must become is necessary in every oblast', since without it an effective fight against diseases of the heart would be impossible.

At expanded sessions of the Scientific Council of the Ukrainian Institute of Clinical Medicine the chief therapists of the oblast's report on the state of the rate of diseases of the heart, vessels, and rheumatism, and the means of combatting them in the particular oblast'. This measure will help to coordinate more completely the institute's possibilities with the public-health needs of the particular oblast' and without a doubt will contribute to the introduction into practice of certain methodologies that have been studied at the institute.

In view of the fact that the existing forms of accounting do not give one a complete idea of the situation with respect to the rate of diseases of the circulatory system, the institute is carrying out thorough study of the rate of cardiovascular diseases and rheumatism among the urban population of Khmel'nitskaya Oblast' on the basis of primary documents. The aim of this work is the study not only of the level of the rate for those diseases, but also the deficiencies that occurred in the

diagnostics and accounting of that group of diseases, and the comparison of the results of that group of diseases, and the comparison of the results of that thorough study with the report data. This will make it possible to systematize the errors revealed in the methodological instructions, with the aim of preventing them in the subsequent practical work of the physicians, and also will permit a more critical approach to the analysis of the report data received.

In 1958 the scientific associates of the institutes visited 25 oblast's in the Ukraine, where they studied the work on the fight against cardiovascular diseases. In Odesskaya Oblast', since February 1958 the oblast' cardiorheumatological laboratory has carried on a large amount of work that was begun with a thorough study of the state of the disease rate by individual cities and rayons in the oblast'. A number of the clinics in the oblast's center and in the rayons of the city were studied. As a result of this study, it was established that the high number of cases of atherosclerosis in Odessa was caused by errors in diagnosis. The director of the oblast' cardiorheumatological laboratory established working contact with other oblast' specialists, worked out a plan for dispensary and recuperative measures. In L'vovskaya Oblast', in addition to the oblast' cardiorheumatological laboratory, two city cardiorheumatological laboratories have been organized; the work of these laboratories has proven to be extremely effective.

In one of the republic's largest oblast's, Stalinskaya Oblast', where, as of 1 January 1958, 1,442 therapists were working chiefly in the cities, the work on the fight against cardiovascular diseases is headed by five cardiorheumatological laboratories. As compared with 1956, this work has improved sharply; the number of persons given dispensary treatment in city hospitals has increased considerably and become more timely. At the same time, in a number of places the work is obviously inadequate. For example, in the hospitals of Artemovsk dispensary treatment is provided for only 29% of the patients diagnosed as having rheumatic defects of the heart and 37% of those diagnosed as having hypertension; in Makeyevka the percentage of persons given dispensary treatment after they are diagnosed as being in the first phase of hypertension is low, and in the hospitals of Gorlovka dispensary observation is provided for less than half the persons who have had myocardial infarction. All the inadequacies revealed in the work of the cardiorheumatological laboratories were discussed at the oblast' public-health section and methods to eliminate them were set down.

The oblast' cardiorheumatological laboratory in Chernovtsy is operating well. The principal attention here is devoted to organizational-methodological and therapeutic work in the rayons of the oblast', and this will help, to a considerable extent, to improve the therapeutic and prophylactic aid provided to the public. This laboratory has taken active part in organizing an interkolkhoz sanatorium for persons with cardiovascular diseases in the village of Shcherbintsy, where hydrogen-sulfide springs have been discovered. The physicians at the laboratory have a clear-cut work program in the field of dispensary treatment of patients:

81% of the rheumatism patients are given dispensary treatment. The oblast' laboratory engages in organizing therapeutic physical culture, therapeutic nutrition, in making selections of persons to go to health resorts, etc.

In Sumskaya Oblast' the physicians in the city cardiorheumatological laboratories work there in addition to their basic duties, and without any additional compensation. A study of the situation revealed a large number of inadequacies in the work done by the laboratories in combatting cardiac pathology and rheumatism. There is no oblast' cardiorheumatological laboratory in this oblast'. The same situation also existed in Khar'kov prior to April 1958.

In conclusion it must be noted that the order of the Ministry of Public Health USSR concerning the fight against cardiovascular diseases undoubtedly played a positive role in this important state matter, as may be seen from the figures that we have cited concerning the prophylactic work in the field of cardiology in the Ukraine.

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