

The Concept of Medical Ethics and Some Solutions to Improve Medical Ethics of Medical Staff in Vietnam Today

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Abstract— During the development of medicine from ancient times to the present, the particularly important role of physicians in care and protection of human health has always been appreciated. Based on such role, medical practitioners are required to have stricter ethical standards than any other profession. In this article, we herein clarify some historical concepts of medical ethics, the role of medical ethics in the development of physicians' personality, and some features of medical ethics of medical staff at the present time. Based on this, we propose some basic solutions to improve medical ethics of medical staff in our country.

Keywords— Medical ethics and medical ethics education.

I. INTRODUCTION

The cause of national construction and defense, industrialization and modernization of the country is setting new requirements that require medical staff to have not only firm political quality, extensive professional knowledge and skills but also medical ethics to achieve the goal: "To innovate and improve the quality of protection and care of human health to meet the requirements of human development strategy" [1]. Therefore, improving medical ethics of medical staff in our country nowadays plays a very important role.

II. THE CONCEPT OF MEDICAL ETHICS, THE CURRENT SITUATION AND SOME BASIC SOLUTIONS TO IMPROVE MEDICAL ETHICS OF MEDICAL STAFF IN OUR COUNTRY

1. The concept of medical ethics

When it comes to ethics, Friedrich Engels confirmed "If we see that each of three classes in modern society: the feudal aristocracy, the bourgeoisie (middle class) and the proletariat, has its own morality, then we can only conclude that people with or without self-consciousness eventually learn their concepts of morality from practical relationships..."[2]. Because concepts of morality are drawn from practical relationships, "in fact, every class and even every profession has its own morality..."[3]. Medicine whereby has its own morality which is medical ethics. In essence, medical ethics is a specific expression of progressive social morality of people working in the healthcare industry.

Such concept of medical ethics was identified very early. Hippocrates who is considered the ancestor of ancient Greek medicine, more than 2,000 years ago, brought up the basis of morality which physicians must follow and must take an oath before entering the profession. In his vow, he pointed out "I will guide all regimes that benefit the patients, depending on

my ability and judgment, I will avoid all bad and unfair things, I have been working all my life in impartiality and necessity, wherever I go, I'm only for the sake of the sick people..." [4].

In Vietnam, the great physician Tue Tinh (XIV century) affirmed that the practice of medicine is the career succession of the holy beings, it must be conducted with a compassionate heart. Mr. Le Huu Trac (also known as Hai Thuong Lan Ong) (1720-1791) always upheld the role model of medical ethics, during his whole life of training and service, he always reminded himself of advanced virtue and professional practice. Advanced virtue means to daily train for the perfection of medical ethics. Professional practicing means to daily study for higher medical qualification. As for Hai Thuong Lan Ong, medicine practice is not only confined to scope of professional practice but also includes medical ethics. Medicine must be associated with medical ethics. Grasping humanism in medicine, Hai Thuong Lan Ong said that a true physician not only has a solid knowledge of expertise but also determines his own ethical standards. That is the true meaning of medicine and also the decisive factor to build and develop the medical profession. In his writing, he expressed that "deeply thinking, I understand that the physicians are to protect the life of the human being, they can manage the well-being, risks and luckiness of patients. Thus, one must have adequate knowledge, complete virtue, a vast soul, wise and well-thought-through actions to learn to practice that noble profession. It can be seen that Hai Thuong Lan Ong conceived the duty of a physician does not stop at a normal ethical level but manifests itself in all professional relations; from the ability of professional awareness to the concept of career goals and attitudes towards patients, with colleagues, especially the duty of physicians for the misery of poor patients and unfortunate people in contemporary society. These are called institutionalized medical ethics. According to him, it is the true nature of the physicians. Considering it as *Nhân, Minh, Trí, Đức, Thành, Lượng, Khiêm, Cẩn* (Kindness, Intelligence, Wisdom, Virtue, Honesty, Generosity, Humility, Diligence), he said that medicine is not only a science, but also a very noble-minded career. So, the physicians must know how to preserve their quality, not seeking personal benefits. In the book titled *Y huấn cách ngôn* (Medical-training aphorisms), he wrote: "Medicine is a human art, specializing in protecting human life, taking care of people's worries, enjoy people's joy, considering helping people as a duty without asking for benefits" [5].

Inheriting the tradition of medical ethics of the nation, absorbing the essence of medical ethics of humanity, the President Ho Chi Minh paid special attention to cultivating and training medical ethics of revolutionary physicians. He sent many letters and directly met and visited medical facilities, expressed our Party and State's views on the quality of physicians. He emphasized that the ethics of physicians means to "love the patients like your siblings, be dedicated to serve the people. The physicians must be like gentle mothers" [6]. For military medical staff, he also graciously advised "the physicians not only have the duty to cure diseases but also support the spirit of the patients ... the physicians must be like gentle mothers" [7]. Thus, it can be said that the ethics was raised to a new level by the President Ho Chi Minh - revolutionary medical ethics. According to his thoughts, medical ethics is not only an infinite love for patients, but also a spirit of enthusiasm for career, always actively cultivating knowledge to improve professional capacity and comprehensive qualification to better meet the needs of health care and protection of soldiers and civilians. The revolutionary physicians who want to be good must be intensive, who want to make medical ethics fully implemented and have practical significance must constantly cultivate medical theory and medical skills and must always enrich their own knowledge.

2. A few features of the current situation of medical ethics in Vietnam today

Thoroughly grasping Ho Chi Minh's thoughts on medical ethics and views on the revolutionary ethical education of our Party, in 1996, the Ministry of Health issued 12 articles on medical ethics (also known as "12 professional standards of medical practitioners"). Since then, the thorough understanding and implementation of this Regulation in health facilities across the country has had important changes in quality. In recent years, many officers, experts, doctors in the medical industry in the whole country have constantly cultivated and trained to improve their professional qualifications and ethics, and wholeheartedly devoted themselves for the health and happiness of patients, even though facing high risks of infection. In dangerous epidemics such as SARS, influenza A/H₅N₁ epidemic, many doctors stayed awake all nights at the hospital, forgot to eat and sleep with the hope to find out the cause of the dangerous diseases to regain life for the sick people from death, they were ready to donate blood to save patients ... Outstanding achievements in the cause of people's health care, especially with dozens of units and individuals who were conferred the noble title of Hero in the renovation period, have proved the dedication and sacrifice of Vietnamese physicians in the care and protection of people's health. However, nowadays, the negative side of the market mechanism, along with the negative effects of the globalization process has led to the fact that money interferes with the relationship of physicians and patients. In the medical industry, there is a tendency to prefer treatment to prevention, prefer direct contact with patients to indirect form. A few doctors and medical staff have negative manifestations which violate regulations on medical ethics and are condemned by the public such as harassing the patients' families, disregarding the lives of patients, discriminating rich and poor

patients, etc. The fact is that in the course of professional activities, a small portion of doctors has not been properly and fully aware of the level of medical ethics decline. They think that the decline in medical ethics is something very serious, such as corruption, bribery, etc. but not aware that medical ethics is falling from their behavior and communication with the patients, from their irresponsibility in care and medical treatment for patients daily, from their waste of medical equipment and supplies to their attitude to colleagues, from their failure to study, practice, abide by professional regulations, hospital technical processes leading to errors in professional activities. Therefore, the training of medical ethics of physicians must start from the change in awareness, on that basis, it is possible to change the medical ethical behaviors and medical ethical relationships of physicians during their professional activities.

3. Some basic solutions to improve medical ethics of medical staff in Vietnam today

In order to improve the medical ethics of medical staff, the health sector itself should attach much importance to political thought. The physicians with medical ethics must first be exemplary citizens, so the development and implementation of medical ethics must attach with the education and self-education to improve the political quality, ethics and lifestyle of medical staff. One special thing to consider is to invest more appropriately in the education of medical ethics for future physicians when they are still in school. Along with political and ideological work is the construction and organization of hospitals and clinics in the direction of civilization, modernity, care of and contact with the people in a friendly way. The landscape and environment of a hospital to the working style of physicians are also criteria to assess the performance level of medical ethics of that hospital. In order to improve medical ethics of physicians, it is indispensable for medical facilities to well conduct the management of hospitals, make transparent revenues and expenditures. At the same time, it is necessary to strengthen the reform of administrative procedures, especially medical examination and treatment procedures, avoid overlapping and cumbersome situations, aiming to well serve the medical examination and treatment needs of the people, especially policy beneficiaries, poor people, people living in remote and isolated areas, revolutionary base areas, etc. Finally, synchronous implementation of social policies in the health sector is required. It is necessary to have specific solutions, give deep concerns about the spiritual and material life of physicians and doctors, create favorable conditions for them to better perform medical ethics.

III. CONCLUSION

Medical ethics is a very important quality of a physician. Improving the medical ethics of medical staff in Vietnam today not only has deep socio-political significance, but also a regular and urgent task of the health sector to improve the efficiency of healthcare, also create trust and love of the people for the physicians, for the regime. Based on that, the whole health sector in general and each physician in particular is required to make more effort in cultivating medical ethics,



actively learn to improve professional qualifications, strive to implement Ho Chi Minh's teachings: A good physician must be like a gentle mother.

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