

Social context of health and illness

Sociology



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Disease makes a harmful effect on the life of the person. It can affect one part of the body, but spreads on mind, behavior and his inner state. The aim of this work is to describe the principle of traditional approach towards health illness.

Peter Aggleton gives an interesting definition of the content “ disease” as a traditional phenomenon. In his book “ Health” he writes: “ disease is usually understood as the presence of some pathology or abnormality in a part of the body” (Aggleton, P., 1990, 5). This definition is presented from the medical point of view. However, this content also exists as a sociological event. It indicates that health is influenced by different factors, such as economic, cultural, political, environmental and so forth. For example, if we take environmental factors, they include the necessary life facilities such as: the access to medical services, gendered identities as well as the employment status.

Peter Aggleton provides a set of guiding principles, which orientate health work in a particular way. In his book, he describes three main arenas in which healing of the person usually takes place. “ The first of these is often the home or community within which we live. The second arena is the one in which non-professional healing specialists – such as clairvoyants, faith healers and herbalists operate. The third arena is made up of modern professional bio-medicine as well as what Kleinman calls the professionalized healing traditions of Indian, Chinese and native American medicine”

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(Aggleton, P., 1990, 4).

The community arena predetermines mostly the mental perception of disease in terms of different sociological factors. At the same time we observe that medical professions are becoming extremely popular among young specialists. Roy Porter examines the following question: “ Could the rise of medical professions achieve much to reduce morbidity and mortality? Were English people healthier in 1850 than in 1750, 1650 or in 1550? Were they living longer? If so, how far was it thanks to medicine” (Porter, R). We’re facing with the question whether one’s mental views over the human body and overall emotional state has a significant influence over health his/her health, or it can be only regarded as a subordinate affect. J Santrock believes that health can be understood only as a combination of 3 factors: social factor, biological and, of course, psychological. (Santrock, J).

The attitude of the surrounding people to the ill person makes a great effect on the process of healing. For example, a fourteen years old girl Beth from Kentucky was allergic to sea products. Her parents did not prepare any meal, which contained seafood in order to prevent the negative consequences. At one of the birthday parties, Beth saw fish on the table and refused to eat it. As a result, most of her friends refused to eat fish as well in order not to make Beth feel uncomfortable about her meal restrictions. This situation shows how close people can sometimes be sensitive and caring in respect to the health problems of other person. The supporting attitude positively influences the affected person, precipitating the process of recovery.

The second arena includes the usage of modern techniques, which are far from the traditional medicine. For example, Chinese alternative medicine includes such methods as homeopathic, chiropractic, acupuncture and so

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forth. Acupuncture is, for example, is the old Chinese practice, which helps to get rid from stress and receive the abundant flow of energy.

The modern bio-medicine includes the usage of drugs and surgery in the appropriate circumstances. For example, during the last years the operations on heart transplantations became widely practiced.

Analyzing these principles, we can definitely say that different people use various approaches in defining and healing their health problems. “ Beliefs about health vary from place to place as well as at different times in history” (Aggleton, P., 1990, 4). For example, there are different perception of health in the community, where the children die in their first year and where the level of adult life is low. Consequently, health is a relative quality to the circumstances and surroundings, in which people exist and function.

As a conclusion I would like to admit that any negative state of human body, no matter if it's a regular influenza or problems with some particular organ, should be regarded a solid state of organism, thus, it needs to be treated as a complex therapy. The state of our bodies is a combination of numerous physical and psychological factors, where changing of them with influence the rest of them. One can compare organism with a bell – beat it in one place and the whole construction will react.

Works cited

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