

Bad medicine from the uses of wrong procedures

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Abstract

Cases of bad medicine by using wrong procedures have been numerous due to lack of medical knowledge, despite the efforts of doctors to cure diseases. According to scholars David Wootton and Nathan Belofsky, these cases have been encountered since ancient times. Doctors, scientists, and thinkers who introduced wrong theories and involuntarily injured people during the treatment of their illness were not charlatans, but well-known doctors, the leading medical figures of their time. At present, medicine has been introduced to the right path of its development, alleviating pain and curing many illnesses, which has made it possible to increase the life expectancy of humans. However, even in today's and the most advanced medicine of the future, which are the direct inheritance of previous medicine, sometimes bad medicine cases by using the wrong procedures are encountered. In Albania since the 1990s, with its opening after a long isolation, the possibility was created to apply world biomedical sciences achievements, but also the bad and forbidden medical practices of developed countries. The author analyze a medicolegal case in Albania involving the misuse of cancer treatment with sodium bicarbonate from an Italian physician. It is necessary that relevant institutions, strengthen the control and legislation concerning the work of foreign doctors in Albania to prosecute these cases and avoid medical malpractice.

Key words: *Bad medicine, Wrong medical procedures, Albania, Italy*

Introduction

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According to scholars David Wootton and Nathan Belofsky, these cases have been encountered since ancient times. Doctors, scientists, and thinkers who introduced wrong theories and involuntarily injured people during the treatment of their illness were not charlatans, but well-known doctors, the leading medical figures of their time. (Belofsky 2013 and Wootton, D. 2006).

These wrong procedures, including the use of magic, blood loss (salasso), rotational movements of the mental sick persons, and many others, have remained hidden for a long time, buried in the piles of old books and documents.

Some historical data on bad medicine

Some of the most prominent cases of bad medical practice during the past centuries (Belofsky 2013, pp. 1 - 90), are as follow:

-In ancient Babylonia (Belofsky 2013, pp. 2-3), in archaeological materials: clay tablets fortuitously baked to stone during a fire, it turns out that the illnesses were treated there by the collaboration of magicians called *asipu* and doctors, the *asu*, but the *asipu* had the greatest value. So they believed some illnesses were caused by the disturbances occurring to humans by gods and demons and others from a person's own bad behavior. For their treatment, they advised, among other things, placing special signs in the sick's home, such as, for example, putting on a pig's tail, or having a soothsayer drink the so-called "magic drink" shot in a leather bag, where also the hairs of a black dog and a cloth dampened with the menstrual fluids of one woman.

Another treatment was carried out by placing around the neck of the diseased manure made from fecal matter of pigs; or for dental diseases: the sick person had to sleep for seven days near a human skull and kiss it seven times each night.

-In Ancient Egypt, in Smith's papyrus, it was noted that scalp was treated with fresh meat; in Kahun papyrus: they were treated by rubbing the eyes of the patient with the fat of the goose together with the liver of a kind of monkey. At a person with a toothache it was put a dead mouse in his mouth and throat (Belofsky 2013, pp. 4 - 5).

-In Old Greece they thought that the world was made up of earth, wind, fire and water; the art of cure required that these elements be kept in equilibrium through diet, meditation, and exercise (Belofsky 2013, pp. 5 - 8).

-In Old Rome, the historian Old Plin, for his toothache, advised as a medication, among other things, that the patient's mouth had to be rubbed with a tooth of hippopotamus and he had to eat the wolf's head dust (Belofsky 2013, pp. 8 - 10).

-John Gaddesten, in the Middle Ages, in the 1300's, John Gaddesten, a doctor of medicine at Oxford University in England, incorrectly recommended, among other things, that before taking a trip, the man had to remove a quantity of blood ; for the cure of paralysis, boiling a dead dog was used; while for the poisoned children, their parents had to add to their food, without telling the children, meat of the goose; for the treatment of epilepsy he roasted a cuckoo and blew its powder up a person's nose; if it had no result, he would advise to hung the cuckoo's beak around his patient's neck (Belofsky 2013, pp. 20 -21).

-Dr. Benjamin Rush (Belofsky 2013, pp. 94 - 96). In the late 1700s, Benjamin Rush, one of the signer of the US Declaration of Independence and the treasurer of the US Mint, was at the same time one of the most well-known doctors of the time.

He was considered the father of American psychiatry. But he mistakenly thought that psychic illnesses were caused by bad blood circulation in the brain, bad weather, the blood transfusion from animals to humans, etc.

For the treatment of these diseases, among others, he poured acid on his patient's backs and cut them with knives; he kept these wounds open for many months or years, so that he would facilitate "permanent discharge from the neighborhood of the brain.

Another wrong method he used to do was to let the mentally ill without being fed, as he had heard that in Hindi, wild elephants were tamed through starvation.

In addition, he has recommended healing by the oscillation. For this, the psychic patient was strapped to chairs hung from the ceiling by a length of chain, which rotated for hours as a fugue, but that he did not use this method at the hospital.

But on the other hand, Dr. Rush has defended the human treatment of the mentally ill. At his hospital in Pennsylvania, he threw away the chains that kept them tied and treated them with love.

Today the seal of the American psychiatric society has the face decoration of Dr. Rush¹.

-George Washington (Belofsky 2013, p. 116). An incorrect medication has also been applied to George Washington, the first US president in the period of his death. On December 13, 1799, he began to complain of sore throat and the next morning showed respiratory disturbances.

Immediately it was applied a blood loss (salaso) of about half a liter blood. Then they came to visit three of the best doctors in the country, and they did two bloodlettings of twenty ounces apiece. Finally another doctor came and he took blood again.

All of these actions were carried out over a period of eight hours, during which G.Washington was removed half of his blood volume. On 14.12.1799, at 10:10 p.m. he died.

-Leucotomy and transorbital lobotomy. In 1939, the Portuguese psychiatrist Egas Moniz began performing the lobotomy or leukotomy operation in patients with psychiatric illnesses in Lisbon. For this, he drilled holes in the skulls of mentally ill people, and after that he destroyed the surrounding tissue around the side with alcohol and the wires that he inserted into the brain through this hole. In these neurosurgical interventions, the link of prefrontal cortex to the rest of the brain, was interrupted. Very soon this type of operation spread to all countries of the world, despite its poor results: high percentage of postoperative mortality, memory loss, various personality disorders, etc. (Çipi, B. 2005, Çipi, B., Meksi, S. - 2017 and Çipi, B., Çipi,S. 2015).

However, E .Moniz, for the discovery of this operation, was honored in 1949 with the Nobel Prize in Medicine.

But for his bad luck, one of his patients, apparently not fully convinced of the curative value of leukotomy, after threatening him several times, shot a firearm at the backbone, so he was paralyzed forever (died in 1955) (Çipi, B. 2005. p.121).

Another variant of this operation was that of American surgeon Walter Jackson Freeman, which was called transorbital procedure. Instead of dealing with skull drilling, used by Moniz, which was quite difficult, he entered in the brain directly through the eye hole. For this, he used ice picks, which he imprinted with a hammer and then rolled it many times after being inserted inside his head (Belofsky 2013, p. 177 - 178).

In the 1960s, these operations diminished considerably, as a result not only of objections from public opinion but also of the discovery of psychotropic medications. Currently, they are rarely carried out.

From the ethical point of view, the application of these methods is detrimental, because there is no scientific support, the results are very few, and the secondary effects are serious and sometimes have mortal consequences (Çipi, B. 2005. p.121).

Actual situation

These are some of the cases of medical misuse of the past centuries, where doctors based on wrong theories have unknowingly harmed the sick. From the 20th century to the present time, medicine has entered the right path of its development, alleviating pain and curing many diseases and leading to increased life expectancy (Jackson, M. 2014 and Wootton, D. 2006).

However, it should not be forgotten that good medicine in our day and the still more advanced of the future is the direct inheritance of previous medicine (Belofsky 2013).

Thus, even today, sometimes cases of patient injuries are encountered until their deaths from the application of the wrong medical procedures

Bad medicine in Albania

With the opening of Albania in the 1990s, after a long isolation, it was created the possibility that not only the achievements of world biomedical sciences to be applied in our country, but also bad and forbidden medical practice in the various developed countries, be transferred to use in our country.

This may also be due to the weaknesses that occur in the functioning of the respective national medical control links (Çipi, B. 2015 and Çipi, B.,Meksi, S. -2017).

The medicolegal case of treatment of cancer with sodium bicarbonate (Çipi, B. 2018. pp. 247 249).

Such an interesting example of the forensic medicine practice of our country belongs to the case of Italian doctor Tullio Simoncini, convicted and excluded from the right to practice the profession of doctor in Italy, because of the treatment with the baking soda which he had used for cancer in Italy and the Netherlands, had caused the death of some patients.

According to Simoncini, cancer is a fungal infection (*candida albicans*) that develops in an acidic environment, so Simoncini found the method of treatment by changing PH and consequently pretended to stop tumor development or treat it. For this purpose, he used high-grade solutions of high-quality baking powder. He has stated that this medication has been used for 20 years and many of his patients have been healed, even when other doctors predicted a mortal progress.

But his theory, unrecognized by medical science, is wrong, because the sodium bicarbonate introduced into the human body in large doses, disturbs the mineral balance significantly and causes the death of the patient, as were the cases with which he was condemned. On the other hand, this therapeutic procedure has not been subjected to experimental tests by scientific methods.

In 2011, this doctor, through cheating on the leading health instances of our country, was registered by the Albanian doctor's order as a diabetologist and oncologist for the account of the medical clinic "Our Lady of the Good Council".

In 2012, he applied to a private hospital in Tirana, his method of treatment of cancer, to an Italian 27-year-old Italian citizen who suffered from severe brain tumor illness. After carrying out the procedure of introducing the baking soda

in his body, the patient's health condition was exacerbated: headache, vomiting, minor epileptic attacks, until he died on the way to the CHU of Tirana.

The autopsy determined that his death had come from acute pulmonary edema in a person with a malignant brain tumor treated with sodium bicarbonate (baking soda). The case was considered by the forensic medicine and the Albanian prosecution as a careless medical case in the form of negligence, as this medication is not recognized by contemporary protocols, which led to the death of the patient. Albanian courts condemned the guilty doctor in 2015, imprisonment for a year and a half, and waiver of the profession's right for 6 months.

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There are other cases of abuse of application of alternative treatment, such as cancer treatment with fish hook poison, according to a practice that has not been approved in the US and European protocols⁵.

These cases indicate that, for the health of our country, among other things, it is necessary to strengthen the control by the appropriate instances for the admission of foreign doctors who practice our medicine, including the review by the ethics committee of the treatment protocols cases of use by foreign doctors of medical procedures that may be wrong⁵.

Also, as proposed in 2017, the possibility to include in the penal code an article that foresees the punishment of the exercise of alternative medicine, which has had serious consequences for the patients without the appropriate authorization of the health authorities, should also be included⁵.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be noted that:

- The use of medicine, during almost all its history of development, has had many cases of misuse by using the wrong procedures due to lack of medical knowledge, despite the efforts of doctors to cure the disease.
- In the last 100 years, medicine has undergone proper development, affecting the healing and relief of diseases and increasing the life expectancy of humans, even today there are cases of medical misuse by the use of the wrong medical methods, as is the case of treatment of cancer with sodium bicarbonate in some European countries, including our country.
- In Albania, in order to avoid cases of alternative medicine by using wrong medical treatment methods from foreign doctors, it is necessary to strengthen

the control by relevant bodies, including the ethics committee, for the admission of these doctors to practice medicine as well as to strengthen the legislation on the punishment of such cases.

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