Received: 11 December 2009; Accepted: 25 January 2010

Conflict of interest: none declared.

© AVICENA 2010

DOI: 10.5455/msm.2010.22.4-5

Editorial

Medicine and Media

*Izet Masic**Medical Faculty of Sarajevo University, Bosnia and Herzegovina*

In Mostar, at the Hotel Ero, on December 4th 2009 by the Medical Chamber of Herzegovina - Neretva Canton, was organized the symposium on "Medicine and Media." At the symposium was presented 13 papers divided into two sessions. Papers were multidisciplinary in character and exhibitors were from several faculties of the University in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is the first time in Bosnia and Herzegovina that on one place meet and exchange their opinions teachers, researchers and professionals of several disciplines that deal with topics from medicine and the media - two important areas in the life of every man, which are in daily contact and mutual dependence. Unfortunately, their relations in B&H is currently focused on the elemental and immediate current needs with undefined rules and with a lot of disorientation, incompetence, irresponsibility, and often without the respect of minimum professional customs, proper behavior and respect. Consequences of this are very frequent conflicts and the mutual hostility that has resulted in filing criminal charges. True, the media to medicine daily devote considerable space for: health, disease, unhealthy behaviors, lifestyles, organizational problems in health care, nepotism, and many other current problems in the health care system, have become an important factor in the special interest of the public, so the media have the opportunity with publishing in their articles or information in electronic media increase their ratings or edition. So, the media have become one business in which is now a real calculation - how much I get (or lose) if this information release to public. Media are ruled by clans. Stronger clans manipulate the media more, because it is in the interests of the power and money - these two things are interferential and support each other. In our environment clans manipulate the media far more than in the Europe and the world. Unfortunately, the media freedom in Bosnia and Herzegovina is very limited. When it comes to media freedom, our country is among the latest in the world. Usual is the fact that journalists are today - "journalists with the card", which means the more I/we pay the better they wrote about me/us today.

Do the media exaggerate the placing of certain health information; it is one of the topical issues of guided discussion. It was pointed out in answers to these questions that often is exaggerated the criticism or in understanding of the government actions (health system and its employees) should do. Also is pointed out that the important open issues in a professional manner without any pretensions to enter detailed analysis of the process of events and causes of their occurrence. Conditionally speaking, it is "open

LIJEČNIČKA/LJEKARSKA
KOMORA HNŽ/K
MEDICAL CHAMBER OF
HERZEGOVINA – NERETVA KANTON
88000 Mostar, ul. dr. Bariše Smoljana br. 4

organizira
u suradnji sa Filozofskim fakultetom
Svedučilišta u Mostaru

SIMPOZIJ

MEDICINA
I
MEDIJI

druga obavijest

Hotel „Ero“ Mostar 04.12.2009.
u 10 sati

issues" by the media, and the final court of "cut" the problem should publish official institutions - prosecutors and courts. Citizens, as consumers of health information are not enough trained/qualified to understand the problems and give them qualified judgment. On the other hand today's journalists, who deal with medicine and health, too, are not enough qualified and most are students of the Faculty, rather than professional journalists who for their work receive full salary commitment. The first to this is because most cannot find job in their profession. Here in a worse position are the written electronic public media. Also pointed out is that the media have a strong influence of politics or political parties in B&H. Unfortunately, in the future it is expected that the media will remain under strong political influence. A particular problem for the journalists in case of health information, regardless of whether they are sufficiently tested in terms of their accuracy and relevance of sources that they provide, health events or current events are placed in sensationalist manner.

They interest is that "news sells better," regardless of ethics or respect for which it's written about. Here is questionable, besides journalistic professionalism and accountability, personal ethics and personal morality of journalists who published this information. There are cases that the texts in the field of health and medicine embrace of powerful political decision makers in the health-care and medical director of business organizations. The problem is that untrue or tendentious news published are often demented, but likely theory that one who has read the first story in 50% of cases will not read the denial. On the other hand, denial is usually not denied the essence of the problem, but in a way that matches the media who published the primary news. Regardless of the applicable laws: on health care, on health insurance, criminal law, the law of defamation, a code of ethics for health workers, the Charter of Patients' Rights and many other laws, because of slow prosecutors and the judiciary all this gets another softer dimension. Disputes are resolved slowly and since the sanctions were much milder than in other countries where the system is fully operational. Today, some influential decision-makers, using social media have "their" journalists (newspaper) that "reward" them and they publish the information you want, often affirmative, although some of their decisions come under criminal responsibility, which is also at odds with the Code of Ethics, which obligates them in their professional work. On the other hand, patients in the existing constellation of political and social relationship of the judiciary and prosecutors in B&H are afraid to tell the truth and resort to criminal charges against those responsible for failures in health and implications of their professional activities which fall under the criminal legal responsibility.

Therefore, the above set of participants agreed that the issue about which they discussed is very current in today's social and political situation in B&H. Although the media generally cover three most important areas: the popular content-related medical issues, b) contribution by monitoring current events in health care with appropri-

ate reporting and c) reporting on crisis situations and affairs, and concluded that all the information and current events from these areas are focused mainly on elemental and relate to the immediate needs of current and each other - the providers and users of the health system. Most texts that are published in the field of health have negative connotations or sensational character and the least affirmative or educational - that are almost lacking or very rare. Basically, the focus of public interest in media placed information related to reports on crisis management and affairs. A very important aspect of the problems are massive, and wide use of electronic media, especially Internet, through which there is massive and uncontrolled spread of untested and nonprofessional health information. The right to information, some very widely understood and when it comes to virtually no restrictions on the whom, when and where you can qualify for health information because there is no liability for the content on the Internet because the standards are inadequate and there are no licenses for the institutions or journalists open your blog and your website.

The conclusion is that today there is almost none investigative journalism. Too much space is given to unprofessional journalists, insufficiently educated, non-eligible and without experience. Unfortunately, the professional associations of journalists do not have in all this a significant role and individuals became institutions for themselves. On the other hand, the weakness of health care institutions and medical professional associations that are interested in this field to make the balance, turn, or reform foster this condition that such relations between medicine and media, inarticulate and poor, which should try in the future to become adequately resolved.

*Prof Izet Masic,
Editor-in-Chief*