

Should we discuss in 'The Internet Journal of World Health and Societal Politics' fears and concerns related to planned ways of prevention of the epidemics of swine flu?

A Brodziak

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Abstract

Sir,

It happens that unknown or varied bacterial or viral disease occurs. It is the case of 'swine flu' (1). The epidemiological situation is then evaluated and presented in the medical literature. The objective data about the etiology, pathogenesis and mode of spread of this new disease are also discussed. The mass-media, however, usually in such a situation inform faster than the professional literature on the decisions taken by national and international institutions established to protect health and provide appropriate sanitation and epidemiological remedies. The coordinating role of the World Health Organizations and its specialized agendas are recognized (2,3).

It is not strange that in the case of diseases of global reach the mass-media forward from day to day information about the new pathogenic agent and development of preventive and curative methods.

It is known, that the media with regard to popularity with readers and the number of TV audience are trying to dramatize the situation in order to attract the attention of readers and viewers, as that it is in their best financial interest.

In some cases, due to the combination of a zeal of the health officials, public health authorities and mentioned exaggeration in comments from the side of the mass-media on recommended activities evokes an unhealthy state of mind throughout the population, characterized by the large diffusion of the pessimistic forecasts first and then the concluded fears, concerns and even panic. Unhealthy state of mind affects the health of the population. In the field of

public health is a known regularity.

This kind of circumstances is now seen in relation to the so-called swine flu. Intense information services on the prevalence, prevention, and especially on the anticipated activities in the realm of mass vaccinations by TV, journals and websites, as well as the content of conversations, as each of us about the epidemics of swine flu results in unhealthy or even 'toxic' state of mind of the public.

In my view, it stems from two important new phenomena. Both the officials of medical institutions and representatives of the mass-media do not take into account this new situation, which occurs all over the world for several years.:

1. Over the 2 - 3 last year, due to improved technical possibilities, a new situation emerged in terms of expressing opinions on the ongoing current events. It is possible by the significant development of the Internet. Millions of people in each country bought the high-speed access to the Internet content and started to look into the various societal portals and read the resources of such media as 'YouTube', 'Google - Video' and others. Hundreds of websites were created recently, also about medical matters, each presenting to the entire range of possible opinions (4). Knowing the diversity of human thought - is generally understood, why so many of different sites present different, polarized theories and beliefs, also related to the prevention of swine flu.

It turns out that sometimes it makes more difficult to develop the desired state of mental health based on coherent and optimistic model of the world. Often it raises more and more fears, frustrations, leading up even to panic (5). One could say - well, if someone wants to be excited and flutter -

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it is his matter. However, this phenomenon causes dangerous societal phenomenon caused by the fact that in minds of many people the views, opinions, theories are defective, do not reflect the reality and promote evil, bad social actions.

2. The institutions established for the medical care and to look after for the right sanitary state and right public health, moreover - paid for with taxpayers' pockets - see the medical problems only by the perspective of "germs and medicines". They don't consider the psychological consequences of their actions and influences upon the poor mental state of society.

Following the existence of the mentioned websites the public opinion is excited by information and recurrent, persistent, obstinate, stubborn rumors about such possible or planned, expected actions as: vaccination of entire populations, forced vaccinations, restriction of people reluctant to submit to vaccination by the administration of schools, colleges, employers, large-scale quarantine, use of military action for prevention and so on. The authors of these sites reveal also possible complications in state of health state of people who submit themselves to vaccinations (6,7,8).

Unfortunately, in addition to reasonable medical publications about mandatory vaccination (9,10,11), the officials of health care institutions disseminate not imaginary, but real information about the plans to submit entire populations to vaccinations, e.g. the aver all population of Greece (12), the quarantine ordinances for tourist passengers and even navy ships (13), etc.

Anyhow, already - the presented mass fears and anxieties are the facts independent of the existence of the virus and the incidence of influenza.

It is not easy to draw attention to psychological implications of the discussed phenomena and actions of health administration officials such as Ministries of Health of particular countries or heads of WHO agendas, for example, such as [Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) on Immunization].

It should be possible to present the state of minds of the world population and discuss how to calm the citizens - in the professional journal devoted to public health in the world.

I believe that the professionals in the field of public health are faced to the challenge to formulate and disseminate their

recommendations for the officials of medical organizations and the mass- media being aware that the fears about a pandemic influenza should not be exacerbated - that the opposite is time to calm the public of our planet nations.

First - it should be realized the simple dependency exists between the evoked fears in the populations, e.g. towards vaccinations and the style of official communications and so called recommendations.

It should also be aware that in times of so-called global economic crisis, which, as it seems, was caused by a 'highly placed officials' - in the banking sector - there is a suspicion in the public opinion, that in the other institutions of 'higher order' a similar phenomenon may be widespread. Shortly, as His Holiness the Dalai Lama said, we should be sensitive for the possibility, that sometimes the understandable events can be explained by simple phenomenon of grid.

I treat my letter to your Editor of 'The Internet Journal of World Health and Societal Politics' as a kind of test for the possibility of real presentation of the point of view on the subject of social unrest about the planned or anticipated actions in connection with the swine flu in one of the prominent professional journal devoted to the problems of Public Health.

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Author Information

Andrzej Brodziak

Department of Internal Diseases of the Faculty of Public Health of Medical University of Silesia, Katowice, Poland