

## ETHICOTHERAPY AND HEALTH EDUCATION

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### **Abstract**

*The causes of health problems can be found in the violation of moral principles. Selfishness is considered as a major moral error, which is then negatively reflected in the bio-psycho-social connection with a person's health. The aim of the study is focused on the analysis of values and categories of ethics therapy in relation to health education. Methods of analysis, synthesis, induction and deduction were selected and applied to the method of grounded theory in the sense of studying the concept as the main category, as well as causal and operative thinking. It has been found that selfishness needs to be reduced through the dedication and generosity that can be learned through selfless work. Nutrition ethics is of great importance in the context of ethicotherapy and health education. It was concluded that ethicotherapy with moral treatment and focus in this direction makes sense in the field of health education and healthy lifestyle. Seminars, lectures, projects can be the preferred methods of school education in the field of health education and pedagogical practice.*

### **Keywords**

*Moral health, Ethical dimension of health and disease, Ethic therapy as a way to healing.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The founder of ethicotherapy Ctibor Bezděk, MD was born in 1872 and graduated from the Medical Faculty in Vienna. He worked for many years as a ship's doctor, where he gained experience in the treatment of often complex cases, under the conditions of a ship's doctor. In addition to his medical practice, he devoted himself to extensive social work, worked in the Red Cross, lectured in towns and villages, and set up counselling centres for mothers and children. In the mid-1930s, he returned to Prague, founded an anti-alcohol counselling centre, cared for morally disturbed youth and contributed to the magazine "Spiritual culture". He spent the war and post-war years as a general practitioner in

Senohraby, where he provided successfully primary healthcare to patients.

In the Bezděk's book Ethicotherapy (first published in the early 1930s), he assumed, among other things, that most people believe in a higher principle that interferes with life. He believed that this belief should be sensitively discussed with the patient, supported, but not forced on his own opinion. Many are even a little ashamed of their thoughts, do not talk about them and it is up to the doctor to tactfully be able to open the heart of the sick. According to him the treatment of morals represents the connection between physical health and a person's moral condition. Bezděk judged that moral defects enable and often accelerate the

onset of many physical ailments. He counted “qualities” as defects, such as anger, hatred, greed, hypocrisy, lies, deceptive intentions, negative thinking, etc. Whether these qualities will be in us, it only depends on us, pointed out in the context of health promotion and health education.

Generally, the message of “ethicotherapy” is possible to analyse in Ayurveda, Yoga, Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism, as well as in antiquity and in early Christianity. In antiquity it can be found in Socrates' teaching and in the treatises of philosophers as Pythagoras, Plato, Plutarch, Hippocrates, Ovid, Seneca, and in early Christianity in the messages of Origen, Tertullian Chrysostom, Clement of Alexandria, and other hermits and saints such as Francis of Assisi. Elements of ethicotherapy are evident later in the renaissance, humanism in the works of Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Newton, Spinoza, Rousseau, Comenius, Goethe, Wagner, Schiller, Byron, Shelley, Schoppenhauer, Tolstoy, Lincoln, Nietzsche, Voltaire, Ibsen, G.B. Shaw, Rabinadrath Thrákur, and Mahatma Gandhi. For all of them, moral health is an integral part of human health.

As already mentioned, ethicotherapy deals with negative feelings that affect a person in bio-psycho-socially, especially fear, envy, hatred, injustice, resentment, regret and suffering for others. Each of these feelings causes specific health problems. Currently Vladimír Vogeltanz, MD and Jan Hnízdil, MD develop ethicotherapy in Czech Republic. Vogeltanz emphasizes that development of human relations on the Earth from earliest societies with joined property and living together, through the centuries of wars and inhuman dictators, towards the society where main goal is becoming personal gain and consumption, is showing that system of social upbringing

is completely failing. Our society is not morally healthy. Ethicotherapy - healing using moral powers - is allowing us to stop this process on the individual level by healing illnesses caused by unhealthy relations. On the social level introduction of preventive form of Ethicotherapy (Ethicoprevention) to educational systems is offering new quality of life on the Earth (Vogeltanz, 2009).

Krejčí (2007) states that in terms of importance of health education in our postmodern society psycho – social preparing for health life style is necessary. Impulsivity, aggressiveness, lack of concentration and lack of self-control, problems with sleeping are the main marks of “hypo-kinetic” lifestyle. Risk factors for health are lack of movement, big and often stress, and mistakes in nutrition in present society. Self –esteem and self–control development are necessary. Health education may influence very pragmatically quality of life from childhood till senior age. For this it is necessary to change the spiritual habit of them which educate on any level, in any milieu. Subject of man is not finished at all in whole life. In Health education we can change traditional ways and attitudes to phenomena of health and to phenomena of education. It is possible to find again and again individual compromise between ideal and real because it is not one universal way (Krejčí, 2013).

Health education is a profession of educating people about health in the context of environmental health, physical health, social health, emotional health, intellectual health, and spiritual health, as well as sexual and reproductive health education (McKenzie, Neiger, Thackeray, (2009); Donatelle (2009). Health education can be defined as the principle by which individuals and groups of people learn to behave in a manner conducive to the promotion, maintenance, or

restoration of health. WHO ( defined Health Education as “comprising of consciously constructed opportunities for learning involving some form of communication designed to improve health literacy, including improving knowledge, and developing life skills which are conducive to individual and community health. A health educator is a professionally prepared individual who serves in a variety of roles and is specifically trained to use appropriate educational strategies and methods to facilitate the development of policies, procedures, interventions, and systems conducive to the health of individuals, groups, and communities (WHO, 1998).

Health represents not only a medical category, but it is the category with wide human context. Not only biological and behaviour base of health human life may be analysed, but the Self as well. Physical, mental, social and spiritual determine of the health need a coordinated approaching to the whole problematic of health education (Rehor, Kornatovská, 2013). Culatto and Summerton (2015) state that whole person care is deemed important within UK medical practice and is therefore fundamental in health education. However, spirituality is an aspect of this often neglected. Confusion and discomfort exists regarding how care relating to issues of spirituality and health should be delivered. Different interpretations have even led to disciplinary action with professionals seeking to address these needs. The authors also analysed that 45% of patients want spiritual needs to be addressed within their care. Two-thirds of healthcare professionals want to do this.

## AIM OF THE STUDY

The main goal of the study is the analysis

of values and categories of ethics therapy in relation to health education in the prevention system. A partial goal is to examine the relationship between physical health and moral health, as is often the focus in ethics therapy.

## METHODS

From the point of view of methodology of investigation of these phenomena, methods of analysis, synthesis, induction and deduction were chosen and applied to the method of anchored theory in the sense of studying the concept as the main category, as well as causal and operational thinking.

Continuously in the process of the analysed problems solving, the attention was directed also to hysteresis, emphasizing the importance of historical contexts for the study of observed phenomena.

Conceptually is the research issue focus on health education with context of ethic, quality of life, and illness prevention. The relationship to the wider theoretical context of adaptation effects and health prevention is discussed and systematized.

## RESULTS

On the base of applied method, esp. as the careful linguistic and content analysis and syntheses and philosophical clarifying the major areas of ethicotherapy in the health education context follow results are presented and systemized.

### **Analyse of the categories “Fear” and “Pain” from the view of ethicotherapy**

Ethicotherapy works with various techniques including clinical history which

allows us to look into what's going on in the soul of a sick person. Here the main assumption for a successful treatment is mainly openness of a client. The same level of importance is the doctor's approach during the diagnostics itself which is followed by the treatment. During the treatment a physician focuses on the patient's state, in which it will be crucial to erase the feelings of fear. To help the patient find hope that could replace fear and to teach him how to build new life challenges is the key task for the physician. In ethicotherapy we can find a method of training the patient to be indifferent to his own failures leading him to see the positive sides of life crisis. In especially grave, or even desperate situations, we are trying to suggest the power of a God's will as a mean of consolation. This tendency to point to God's will is a typical sign of Bezděk's theory of ethicotherapy. Bezděk was convinced that talking to God and believing in his existence could help the patients. The ill can perceive the prayer as a plea, which will become a support in hard times. The essential element that needs to be acknowledged in ethicotherapy is a fact that for a person to heal it is necessary to understand and accept his or her life situation. Ethicotherapy is a long-term process of getting to know ourselves that can show us the right path. Mainly in present day, where a person is faced with harmful effects more than ever before, it is extremely important to realize the value of our life. A lot of people suffer from workaholism, a lack of quality sleep or addiction on social media. Ctirad Bezděk was in a way ahead of his time by pointing at latent, but very essential and unanswered questions of each and every one of us. Ethicotherapy helps not only with overcoming illnesses, but also with the feelings of fear. Paradoxically, people rarely ever realize that every day gets us

unconditionally closer to death. People hide their fear of death in everyday chores and they try to make themselves busy with work to avoid thoughts of death. The reason it's this way isn't anything else but fear originating in human nature. People live their lives as if death never comes and intentionally avoid thoughts about their own finality.

In moral life, and primarily on its spiritual level, there are no boundaries. It is very important to see how a change of an opinion on a cause and an essence of a disease can change also an opinion on pain and suffering that is caused by this disease. In general, pain is perceived as something negative that makes us suffer, but from the view of ethicotherapy pain can represent an important factor, whose task is to warn us about our moral disorders which disabled us from living our lives in spirit and truth (Bezděk, 2007, p.77). On the other hand, this fear allows to mobilize our instinct to survive and straightens the will to live. This is why ethicotherapy is based on the fact that everything that is happening is spiritual and it touches all the spheres of a human life.

### **Analyse of the categories "Body" and "Soul" from the view of ethicotherapy**

According to ethicotherapy each disease is born in a soul of a person and that's why it is necessary to begin the healing process from the soul. It is known from ajurveda and yogavedanta philosophy. A systematic yoga practice it may be possible to control inner tension, lack of concentration, feelings of dissatisfaction and other characteristics of a weakened psyche. With the help of yoga exercises, it may be developed mind control (chitta vritti nirodha), i.e. a state of rest of the "waves" of thought, and to have control over the mind. At the same time, the

human "Self" is freed from the mistaken identification with the changing states of consciousness. In this context, it is necessary in addition to asanas, pranayama and relaxation, to practice deep concentration (Maheshwarananda, 2001). It represents a system of systematic training in daily life to health keeping and health prevention within the history of thousands years until nowadays. That is also why it is possible to transfer the techniques of physical, breathing and concentration exercises, which have their origin in traditional yoga, relatively easily into applications in the practice of health education.

In antique origin various philosophical approaches to the problematics of the connection between a soul and a body exist, too. Socrates had been dealing with this thought. Plato and Aristotle developed this idea more deeply, but they both stood by a different theory. Plato connected a person to a soul which only uses the body. The body is a grave of the soul (Plato, 2003, p. 493a). In Plato's conception the body stays after death, the soul leaves. Plato was addressing the immortality of the soul in several dialogues; for example Meno, Republic, Phaedrus or Phaedo. In the Phaedo dialogue, the soul exists apart from the body and can be separated from it. In the fourth book of the Republic, Plato analysed three parts of the soul: the mind, the affectivity (tendency to social good such as power, recognition etc.), and tendency to nourishment and to reproduction (Moučková, Wernerová, 2018). Aristotle in his work On the Soul distinguished three forms of life perfection to which he attributed different types of the soul. A vegetative soul belongs to the plants, a sensorial soul belongs to the animals and a rational soul to the humans. Animals also have the vegetative soul and humans have all three of them, however

this doesn't mean that a human has three souls, but one which has three parts. Therefore, it is interesting, that in the Aristotle tradition consequently accepted by scholastic, the animals and plants had souls, but not as perfect as the humans have had (Aristotle, 1995, p. 414b – 415a).

In humanism the level of care about own health is very deeply wedded with identity and Self - esteem. Only who respects the Self has higher interest to care about health. On the contrary person with low Self - esteem or involved identity, complexes etc. has tendency to neglect or even waste own health. In correlation of this and in fine let me, please, excerpt from Comenius: „ We are obliged to protect body from illnesses and injury. In the first place, because it is the abode of soul, and it is only one ..., after its ruin soul must immediately move from world ... Secondly, idem body is created not only to be abode of soul, but to be the instrument of intelligent mind, without it we cannot anything to hear, anything to see, anything to speak, anything to do, not even to think...Therefore... if intellect breaks, capacity of visualization will break and limbs of body are affected and spirit alone is encroached ...”

For people to decide correctly and to make the right choice, they have to be certain about the question of morality and moral deeds. In the conflict of direct choice and direct mind a person feels the freest. The act of choice isn't an easy act of will, but it must be always in a relationship with the mind and must cooperate with it. An intellectual person has the ability to compose himself thanks to his intellect. We become morally right only through good deeds, therefore we have to make the right choices. In Aristotle's concept a virtue is a disposition which helps a person with free choice, therefore is the mean of a free choice. The

fact whether a person makes the choice freely or involuntarily is very important. Only a free choice is the right one. Human deeds are voluntary only if we know what is right to choose given the circumstances (Hrehová, 2006, p. 129-132). The right choice isn't possible either without intellect or without volitional disposition. Free will therefore associates closely with virtue, but it isn't identical with it. The will is an act and virtue is a disposition that leads to fulfilment of acts. The will doesn't always have to be good, but virtue from its own essence is. The will of a person is free, but it is inferior to intellect (Hrehová, 2006, p. 174-178). A person is daily faced with a situation in which he has to decide and which has influence on his moral, therefore it's necessary to think this decision through with what's written above. A person becomes moral only if he chooses correctly, which is preceded by the right judgement and choice.

The freedom of action is connected to the freedom of will, a person's responsibility for it and his conscience. Ethicotherapy emphasizes a person to act in accordance with his conscience. Virtues are in accordance with the universally valid request to develop one's humanity (Nakonečný, Machula, Samohýl, 2009, p. 378-381). Here lies a very thin line between therapy and ethic. We can follow ethicotherapy message for the concept of health education in the context of health crises in nowadays postmodern society. Here we can mention the emphasis on rationality in important life decisions, getting rid of selfishness and the fundamental concept of selfless love.

## DISCUSSION

Ethicotherapy is an exceptional treatment method that does not omit the patient's spiritual and moral personality. Even in all examinations, modern medicine tends not

to look at man as a whole, and therefore falls into limited materialism. Therefore, it will be important for health education to realize that it is necessary to apply bio-psycho-social and spiritual balance in order to heal a person.

Consistent with the above are the results of a study by Culatto and Summerton (2015) when thirty-two educational institutions in the UK were examined. 5.6% of institutions provide compulsory and specialized teaching "Spiritual aspects of Health", 63.4% provide it as an integrated part. Almost 40% said that staff were not sufficiently trained to teach "Spiritual aspects of Health", but welcomed training opportunities.

Ethicotherapy deals with the treatment of sick relationships. Not only relationships with another person, but also with yourself. Factors that can exacerbate the disease also include an uneven distribution of work, shift work, overtime, unemployment-related problems, and the burden of finding work. To these negative factors we can add an unethical lifestyle, where one feels a desire for intense experiences that become the only meaning of life. The desire for experience becomes the basis of many diseases of modern man, such as alcoholism, nicotine, trachoma and sexually transmitted diseases (Bezděk, 2007, p. 24). New findings have been brought to the medical environment by the study of nervous and mental illnesses, which have shown that they have not been explained by pathological changes in the nervous system. Based on these findings, it was stated that it is necessary to look for the causes of diseases on a mental and spiritual level.

Consistent with this facts Kornatovská and Rehor (2020) declare that Environmental, personal and activity determinants are listed and supported by a variety of self-assessment strategies of

individual' perceived ability to start and stick with exercise regime. During the last decade, we have discovered that good health is no longer a matter of chance but a matter of choice. Choosing to take responsibility for own health by exercising regularly and by consistently practicing other health-promoting behaviours, will promote better health and reduce the risk of disease, disability and premature death. For too many people the term health still means simply "the absence of disease", and the large numbers of people who have no obvious signs of disease or sickness consider themselves to be healthy. Rather than focusing on achieving the state of health or on isolated components of health, some professionals have preferred to focus on good or excellent health and the quest to achieve a high level of physical, intellectual, psychological, environmental, social and spiritual well-being. A "well" person is satisfied in his/her work, is physically fit, enjoys leisure time, is socially involved, and has a positive mental outlook and grasp of reality. Wellness, therefore, describes a lifestyle in which the physical, social, intellectual, mental and spiritual components of health are integrated. The person committed to wellness is continually striving to achieve the optimum level of health within the framework of his or her limitations and potential.

In general, our society has a bias toward curative rather than palliative medicine, toward making the disease go away rather than finding ways to cope with illness. An unfortunate consequence of this perspective is that for persons with chronic disease or disability, we devalue the palliative benefits of preserving functionality and well-being. Since the 1960s, exercise has been promoted as a method of extending life, mainly through prevention and moderation of

cardiovascular disease. In recent years we discovered, however, that perhaps the most significant potential benefit of exercise is its ability to preserve functional capacity, freedom, and independence.

Concentration is often mistaken for meditation - but meditation is much more than just concentration. It comes on its own and, unlike concentration, we cannot learn it. Concentration is a preparatory exercise for meditation. It is to teach us to calm down and observe the body, mind and senses. If our ability to concentrate is not strong enough, we are either restless or falling asleep. And that prevents us from entering meditation. Therefore, when practicing concentration, we will try to overcome both restlessness and drowsiness. For that goal Maheshwarananda (2001) gives some tips for further success in yoga. In addition to recommending vegetarianism he motivates to avoid drugs, intemperance and alcohol, because they are obstacles on yoga path and can ruin all efforts.

## CONCLUSION

At the heart of Bezděk's theory is the postulate that the causes of human health problems can be found in the violation of moral principles. From the point of view of a modern approach to health education, selfishness is key, which Bezděk considers to be the origin of the greatest evil for man, which is then negatively reflected in the bio-psycho-social aspects of health and the state of well-being.

According to Bezděk, the cure for selfishness is dedication and generosity, which can be learned through selfless work that brings joy and goodness. Human nutrition is also a very important factor in this context.

According to Bezděk, the basic pillar of

health education is education for healthy nutrition. One should be able to distinguish between foods that are ethically beneficial to one's body and those that are not.

Psychosomatic, social and spiritual connections with human health have been and continue to be a topical issue. In summary, ethical therapy with moral treatment and focus in this direction makes sense in the field of health education and wellness lifestyle. Seminars, lectures, projects it may be preferred methods of school education in the area of health education. Further consideration should be given implementation of ethicotherapy principles in educational practice.

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