

Summary of the Conference presentation

Verica Jačmenica - Jazbec (Croatia) MD Specialist in Pediatrics, County Hospital of Čakovec

Children Victims: Examples from my Practice

I am a specialist in Pediatrics at the hospital. In the last 10 years, I have been treating more and more children whose parents are in cultic groups. These parents are intellectuals, educated or less educated people, well-to-do or with modest revenue. I examined their children, observing cases of chronic diseases, epilepsy, cerebral palsy, asthma, metabolic diseases, diabetes ... About 70% of the children were being treated by alternative healers.

I usually explain to the parents the nature of the chronic illnesses and seek their cooperation in the treatment of their child, which they do not like. Initially, they agree with the proposed treatment, but soon they begin to secretly search for an alternative. They come back to me (or to their family doctor) only at the stage when the disease has worsened. At the first meeting with a doctor, they always criticize the conventional medicine, speaking with great discretion of alternative treatments.

Alternative therapists promise to cure any disease. For them, there are no incurable or chronic diseases. Parents like to hear this, even if this is not true. At the beginning, the alternative therapist devotes much time to his/her patients, only to exploit them later. Their medicines are advertised as hard to obtain, expensive, but effective. Their drug is revolutionary and recognized in remote clinics, never in their own country. For their therapy, they initially ask for voluntary contributions; later, they impose high prices. Their methods of treatment are never publicly presented, so they escape scientific evaluation. The therapeutic success is based on the impressions and feelings of the patient, not on the objective evidence of tests or experts. In case of failure, the response is to blame the patient or his parents, but never the method of treatment or the therapist.

After 40 years of service where I have been able to thoroughly analyse the attitude of these parents and judge their children's future, I conclude that these parents love their alternative therapist more than their own children. Hence I claim the right to raise the following questions:

1. Where are the limits of the parental rights and power in deciding how to treat their child?
2. Where to draw the line where the State should/must ensure/take over the treatment of its citizens?
3. Do the questions about medical treatment belong to the field of personal freedom?

Summary of the Conference presentation

Verica Jačmenica - Jazbec MD (*Republic of Croatia*) - *Specialist in Pediatrics, County Hospital of Čakovec*

Children Victims: Examples from my Practice

I am a specialist in Pediatrics at the hospital. In the last 10 years, I have been treating more and more children whose parents are in cultic groups. These parents are intellectuals, educated or less educated people, well-to-do or with modest revenue. I examined their children, observing cases of chronic diseases, epilepsy, cerebral palsy, asthma, metabolic diseases, diabetes ... About 70% of the children were being treated by alternative healers.

I usually explain to the parents the nature of the chronic illnesses and seek their cooperation in the treatment of their child, which they do not like. Initially, they agree with the proposed treatment, but soon they begin to secretly search for an alternative. They come back to me (or to their family doctor) only at the stage when the disease has worsened. At the first meeting with a doctor, they always criticize the conventional medicine, speaking with great discretion of alternative treatments.

Alternative therapists promise to cure any disease. For them, there are no incurable or chronic diseases. Parents like to hear this, even if this is not true. At the beginning, the alternative therapist devotes much time to his/her patients, only to exploit them later. Their medicines are advertised as hard to obtain, expensive, but effective. Their drug is revolutionary and recognized in remote clinics, never in their own country. For their therapy, they initially ask for voluntary contributions; later, they impose high prices. Their methods of treatment are never publicly presented, so they escape scientific evaluation.

The therapeutic success is based on the impressions and feelings of the patient, not on the objective evidence of tests or experts. In case of failure, the response is to blame the patient or his parents, but never the method of treatment or the therapist.

After 40 years of service where I have been able to thoroughly analyse the attitude of these parents and judge their children's future, I conclude that these parents love their alternative therapist more than their own children. Hence I claim the right to raise the following questions:

- a) Where are the limits of the parental rights and power in deciding how to treat their child?
- b) Where to draw the line where the State should/must ensure/take over the treatment of its citizens?
- c) Do the questions about medical treatment belong to the field of personal freedom?