
EDITORIAL

“CORRUPTION IN THE CROATIAN HEALTH CARE”
edited by Dražen Gorjanski with Lidija Gajski,
Nataša Škaričić, Srećko Sladoljev and Matko Marušić

Corruption is in fact one of the most serious problems facing countries in transition, which hinders the realization of basic goals of public health and society as whole. The corruption is the actual problem, completely untreated, without a systematic and comprehensive view in the literature, and is particularly topical in the countries affected by war such as Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Corrupt health system diminishes the meaning and stability of the country and threatens the viability of state institutions. This excellent, carefully edited book, which focuses on comprehensive and integrated intention to explain basic concepts related to corruption in the health care system, is accurately described by its title. In essence, this book is the anatomy of corruption in public health, as argued, boldly, with courage and with good intentions points to the truth in the modern Croatian health care system, which can be easily copied and on the problems of actual public health in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as on the whole region of former Yugoslavia. The authors sought to demonstrate in a simple and concise manner the causes of corruption, the conditions in which it occurs, ways of its realization; also they have suggested some measures of its control. So far, the authors analyzed the causes, origins, and consequences of corruption at its finest. This book presented a unique opportunity to me to learn about almost all important issues in regard of this great problem we are faced in our health care systems.

The first idea for preparation of this book was idea to offer to readers some kind of common, easily readable texts that will provide the reading public with basic information about the problem of corruption in the Croatian health care system.

That could be a platform for a series of public lectures that the authors intended to hold in several Croatian cities. The authors had a dilemma: whether book with this title could be easy understandable for readers, also they had dilemma whether to describe individ-

ual cases of corruption and to mention the names of people that have been involved in corrupt activities; whether to analyze the historical dimension of the structure, and functioning of the health system, or to diagnose the current situation only. Final decision was to publish the book as a compilation of authorized essays on corruption, which covers a wide area of the main streams in which health and corruption meet. The book described the principled conflict between public (non-profit) and private (profit) health care; issue of the pharmaceutical industry, the organization of academic medicine, privatization of medical institutions and the state relations towards the patient and his/her rights. For the illustration they analyzed some specific cases of corruption in the Croatian health care system. Nataša Škarčić emphasized that corruption in health care presents difficult and complex subject with the abundance of data and lot of ways how the information can be viewed and interpreted. Each of these authors is capable to write his/her book, but as they decided for a joint project, thus they created work that will serve to create a basis for public discussion on corruption in health care.

The book is composed of eleven sections: Introductory knowledge, Corruption in health care systems, Further findings on corruption in health care, The corrupt behavior of patients, Consequences of corruption in health care, Combating corruption, Matko Marušić: My story, Supplement, Index, Literature and About the authors. Each of these sections contains considerations of common actual problem in health care steeped in corruption.

It is important to emphasize that the book does not deal with individual cases of corruption, and it is not an anthology of corruption scandals in the health sector. The core sections of the book cover reflections of a broader and more systematic observation of corruption. Some cases are mentioned only as reminder or clear evidence for the certain claims and these are ex-

clusively in the role of presenting of nature of corrupt activities in health systems.

The authors stressed the fact that corruption in healthcare is not just doctor bribery – corruption in the health systems is more complex, more developed and more comprehensive. Also monetary amount is significantly larger than the common and simplistic notion that is too often perceived as the only form of corrupt activity. It is often hidden by laws and regulations, wrapped in stories about the welfare of patients, dressed in a robe of humanity, and sometimes it appears even as the official ideology of the party in power.

The authors have affected only the most common forms of corruption, given the complexity of the causes of occurrence, the variety of forms, of places, and manner of appearances and its tendency to spread. The aim of this book is not just a listing of all possible forms of corruption actions than merely outlining their basic outlines. Although it seems simple task, but it is difficult to presume that only individual author could reach even so narrowed goal. For this excellent achievement of set goals knowledge of more skilled professionals was required. The first author, whose idea was to create this book, had the luck with the fact that professionals who are best acquainted with corruption in Croatia helped in the realization of his plan.

The book was not written with the intention of calling anyone for corruption; it was written with the intention of calling all of us. The first author emphasized in the preface: "When it comes to corruption in health care, few among us are those who did not sin in some way, with direct participation, receiving or giving bribes, mediation, persuasion, giving support, approval, silence, inappropriate lukewarm of condemnation or failing to report. Therefore, corruption is there among us - among our colleagues, patients, and friends and especially in ourselves. One can say that corruption is the philosophy of life, way of understanding the world, searching for places in the world in which we live. It depends on us, shall we, using just the corruption, turn the world into an arena in which a cruel, selfish fight is proceeding on, or we shall make it the place of understanding, love and service with not accepting corruption."

The first author illustrates perspectives of our responsibility in regard corruption in health care with famous dictum of North America Indians: "This world we did not receive from our grandparents, but we borrowed it from our grandchildren." Therefore he asked all of us: "Will we be able to look into eyes of our grandchildren, returning to them their world? Or we shall mumbling something, with bowed heads, about corruption and

about "difficult times" and "great danger" and "ignorance of the situation" requiring an apology for something for what apology cannot be - for our (no)action?"

This is an up-to-date volume whose authors often provide relevant, engaging historical context in thoughtfully reviewing selecting aspects of corruption in health care systems, while highlighting trends for its future. These several chapters are excellent, and there is an index, which is a quality tool that readers can easily cope with the book.

This book warns of corruption, while still not too late, so it is useful for a wide readership. Given its quality and topic coverage, it would serve as a particular textbook of deontology for the all profiles of health care professionals, for teachers and students of medicine, for residents assigned to social medicine and all other specializations who would like to understand actual policies in health care services. Also it could be helpful tool to policy makers and to users of health care services.

The list of authors is quite distinguished and represents national experts in the described topic areas. Dr Dražen Gorjanski is an employee of Croatian Institution for Health Assurance, and he deals with the realization of the rights of patients on the basis of positive regulation and supervision of the health system. Dr Lidiya Gajski, an internist is the author of the book "Drugs or a story of deception," who began a new era in thinking about medications and treatment. Nataša Škaričić, journalist, whose name has become a trademark of investigative reporting in Croatian healthcare. Srećko Sladojević, Ph.D., courageous and persistent fighter against corruption, despite being exposed to threats of all kind. Finally professor Matko Marušić, whose Story in this book reveals in detail all the horrors through which not only the individual who dares to oppose corruption but his / her family have to pass through.

Journalist Nataša Škaričić, with her politeness, made available the first research project, "KIT-Corruption and Transparency in health care system of the Republic Croatia" to readers, that would be a chance to examine the extent of corruption in the Croatian health care systematically.

Everywhere in the world corruption is one of the biggest challenges of medical professionalism. Therefore, it is expected that the corruption in the health sector has to be objective of investigation and scientific consideration of health care professionals regardless how it could be unpleasant and dangerous for the authors. This book is proof that there are brave authors who dared to publicly and with arguments to

open this issue, describe its' forms, their causes and consequences of taking the example of a problem in their own country what they are closest to. In this way, Croatia is among the countries that make a significant contribution to solving this problem. Thanks to these authors and the publishing house, Croatia as a country highly rises up to the level which can be envied by many developed countries where corruption has infiltrated health systems.

The authors of this book did not aim only to maintain an open, critical and revealing analysis of the situation of corruption in Croatia, but go further and suggest the possibility of way out from this situation, which becomes the book desirable for reading of all those who are in any way faced with health care services.

It is expected that this book will be an incentive for new and more thorough investigations of corruption.

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