

## THE FACULTY OF HEALTH STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MOSTAR IN THE SERVICE OF HEALTH

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### SUMMARY

*The continuous progress of science has a very positive effect on health care. Health care in its broader sense has greatly progressed in past decades, and the education of health care professions requires more continuous learning, teaching materials and course duration. It becomes clear that continuous education is not only important for good quality doctors, but all participants of health care are gaining more burdens and their work becomes more complex. There is an increased necessity for team work, division of tasks and specialization. In this battle for health, the Faculty of Health Studies becomes a necessity and has an obligation in education of various health personnel due to acquiring practical and theoretical skills, as well as abilities in providing the best possible health care. The path of knowledge is long and difficult. It has been present at our faculty for 17 years and we carry it out through a variety of undergraduate and graduate programs, and as of this years through our postgraduate program. Besides the education of health care workers we wanted to offer to our current and former students, and their educators the possibility of publishing their work, so in 2015 we launched our electronic journal, "Health Bulletin", whose publisher is the Faculty of Health Studies. In the process of continuous battle for health, prevention and treatment, the role of highly educated health care worker is of increasing importance and he certainly becomes an indispensable link in this process. The goal of our faculty is to educate the best possible health care workers, who will in addition to high quality practical work gradually take over our teaching responsibilities at the university.*

**Key words:** faculty of health studies - health

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### Progress of healthcare profession

The continuous progress of science has a very positive effect on health care. In the modern world practically nothing can be done without knowledge; experience and hard work are not enough. General awareness and access to information has increased, as well as the standard of living. Health care in its broader sense has greatly progressed in past decades, and education of health care professions requires more continuous learning, teaching materials and course duration. Doctors are the first who are additionally burdened with new cognitions and the known triad of obligations - professions, science and education. Knowledge, and therefore diagnosis and treatment procedures, are extended to genomics, proteomics and medicine and altogether firmly step into the so-called personalized medicine, where they will treat any patient in a specific way, according to its innate health strengths and weaknesses, pursuant to our currently best available methods and capabilities (Marušić 2015).

Maybe, for some people this is less noticeable, but those branches of medicine and health care, that are not traditionally or contemporary connected to physicians thrive almost in the same way. These branches stretch from the knowledge of medical technology and dealing with it, such as radiological engineering, through the organization of clinical trials, to different forms of management, which include professional and specific assessment of the effectiveness, cost and quality. So it

becomes clear that the importance of continuous education is not only important for good quality doctors, but it is also obvious that all participants of health care are gaining more burdens and their work becomes more complex. There is an increased necessity for team work, division of tasks and specialization. Specifically, the organization of the treatment process is directed to appropriate health care professions which have become indispensable and inevitable links in the process of prevention, diagnosis and treatment of various kinds of diseases (Marušić et al. 2012).

Continuous education and progress of health profession must be based on a scientific approach which derives the need that in that study the basics of scientific methodology have to be learned, observed and practiced. "Problem based learning" was introduced as probably the most important method in medical and health care education. This method develops critical abilities and responsibilities for learning through the experience of solving specific problems. In problem based learning, as opposed to traditional methods, the teacher does not provide complete information, but students discover the information by trying to understand and solve the problem independently. The main goal of this type of learning is for students to integrate this newly acquired knowledge. The role of the teacher, therefore, is not to teach by giving information, but to direct the learning process and so stimulate the students to search, review and evaluate information. The goal is to create an IT literate

person, who is capable of establishing gaps in their knowledge, and on the basis of that access new information that may lead to the resolution of the problem. This way, we create individuals who can acknowledge or dismiss an opinion of an expert, for they are capable of constructing their own arguments. Ultimately, what is most important is that such individuals can combine their own judgments, thoughts, experiments and analysis with the existing information in order to create new knowledge (Mimica et al. 2015).

This does not mean that all students should become scientists. The fact that someone does not have the ambition to do scientific research, does not mean that he does not need science. Without the basic elements of a scientific approach to work, this work can not be done properly. University education in the Bologna system allows health care professions to become equal partners and significantly more useful to physicians in treating patients and caring for the health of the population. Students who acquire their university degrees at the Faculty of Health Studies become associates to doctors, and not only assistants who blindly obey their orders (Marušić 2015, Sinanović & Babić 2016).

The foundations of medical profession in natural sciences create the need for students to know and better understand science during and upon graduation. In their everyday work they will have to keep track of new discoveries in medicine, and they are invited and have a mission to participate in them. That is of great relevance and importance for the establishment of the Faculty of Health Studies in Mostar and for the overall strengthening of the health profession, as well as raising the level of education.

After the founding of Faculty of Medicine at the University of Mostar in 1997 and the Munich Declaration in 2000 the question on education of nurses and other health workers was raised of two reasons. First, the Munich Declaration envisaged for nurses working in health care to have a degree in higher education, and second the Bologna process provided the conditions for higher education in nursing which were necessary for the reproduction of the teaching staff in healthcare. In addition, at the time the Clinical Hospital in Mostar had only 14 nurses, most of them were senior nurses ready for retirement, and all of them finished Advanced Medical School. In Mostar and on the entire territory of Herzegovina, nurses were unable to continue their education after the completion of secondary school. These were the reasons that in 2000 the Health and Social Council of the Croatian Community of Herzeg-Bosnia adopted a recommendation on the development of the project, Curricula for the establishment of the School of Health Studies. Professor Ljubo Šimić, PhD, Dean of Academic Affairs at the Faculty of Medicine was in charge of the mentioned project, who in corporation with other lecturers from the Faculty of Medicine in Mostar, the Medical College in Zagreb and Maribor prepared and assembled the Curriculum for the nursing study program. The University Senate adopted

the proposal of the curriculum, and on May 18th 2000 the Governing Council of the University issued a Decision on the establishment of the School of Health Studies (Šimić 2016).

In 2008, School of Health Studies was renamed to The Faculty of Health Studies, and as a higher education institution at the University of Mostar it organizes and conducts university undergraduate and graduate studies, carries out professional and scientific work in the fields of biomedicine, clinical medicine and public health, and conducts and organizes publishing, library activities for the purposes of teaching scientific and professional work. From 2016 the Faculty of Health Studies offers postgraduate (doctoral) education.

The fundamental reason of existence and mission of the Faculty of Health Studies is to encourage development, dissemination and use of knowledge in the health domain on a local and regional level, and recognition which will be attractive for local and international students, together with highest educational standards which will enable students for work in an international environment.

The Faculty of Health Studies offers the following undergraduate programs: 1. Nursing, 2. Physiotherapy, 3. Radiology – Radiological Technology, 4. Sanitary Engineering, 5. Midwifery; and for graduate study programs - master's Degree (second cycle): 1. Clinical health care, 2. Clinical physiotherapy and 3. Medical Radiology (radiological technology).

### **Health as greatest treasure**

Health is determined and defined as the high level of functional efficiency of a living organism, or undamaged functionality of an organism, harmony of intellectual and biological functions. Also in its broader sense, health can be defined as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being. The term health is most often used as an absence of disease, trauma (injuries and their consequences), deformity and mental disorders. Some factors which influence good health are balanced diet, physical activity and hygiene, as well as family stability and social circumstances.

Preamble to the Constitution of the World Health Organization health is: A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (WHO 2005, 2006).

### **There is no health without mental health**

Mental health is very important from both an individual and a social perspective. It is an indisputable fact that there is no health without mental health. However, there is no universally accepted definition of mental health, and this represents a major obstacle in the development of psychiatry and public health programs of mental health. Recent findings on salutogenetic processes that shape mental health increasingly contribute to better psychiatry and medicine in general. The

task of psychiatry is not only the control and eliminate the symptoms of mental disorders, or establish clinical and functional (social) remission, but complete personal recovery and as fully as possible the realization of personal potential, mental and spiritual well-being (Jakovljević 2016).

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines mental health as a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community (WHO 2001). According to the definition of the World Health Organization mental health is a part of your overall health, and not just the absence of disease.

The care of patients with mental disorders is not only performed by psychiatrists, but also by nurses, occupational therapists, masters of nursing and primary health care physicians, who are more important for the full recovery of the patient than psychiatrists. One often hears how “there is no health without mental health” and that mental health is extremely important, from both an individual and a social perspective. Mental disorders represent a risk factor for many physical diseases, but also a prognostic factor in their treatment. On the other part, physical diseases are almost readily accompanied by the development of various mental disorders. Thereby, it is an indisputable fact that there is no health without mental health. However, there is no universally and widely accepted definition of mental health. It is an interesting fact that the vast majority of textbooks on psychiatry and psychopathology do not contain a definition of mental health. Even more there is a widespread belief that psychiatrists should only deal with mental disorders, and not mental health because in this way they overanalyse the phenomena of everyday life (Kecmanović 2010, Sartorius 2010). Although, notions of “normality” and “mental health” are mainly used as synonyms, they are actually not, because normal is not always healthy. In fact, psychologically normal can be defined as mental health, but it is also defined as something that is standardised, and usually denotes the average, as a process or utopia. On the other hand, what is normal or common for one environment is not necessarily healthy. As it is not always easy to identify the line between madness, evil and mental illness, also the boundary between mental health and illness is often unclear.

### **The “Health Bulletin” in the service of health**

As of May 2015, regularly, twice a year, electronic journal the Health Bulletin is published by the Faculty of Health Studies. It has emerged as a need and desire for publishing, which is of utmost importance and significance for the strengthening of the health profession and raising the level of knowledge and science at the Faculty of Health Studies, and all in the

process of fighting for a better health and in the service of health. Those who follow the development and the current situation of the Faculty of Health Studies know that this year we celebrate our 16<sup>th</sup> anniversary and that from its beginnings till today we have grown into a well-organized faculty, and from this school year, is rounded with postgraduate studies. There is a growing interest for publishing in the Health Bulletin, so this time apart from our colleague’s articles from Bosnia and Herzegovina, we have articles from Croatia and Slovenia. We strive to continue to publish high quality papers and in accordance with our capabilities of systematic work improve their quality, and immediately after this issues we will enter the indexing process. We try with our students and those who finished the higher education process to systematically raise the level of awareness and the need for science. The reason is very simple: we cannot fight for health only by work and profession, but also by participating in scientific work. And this is our permanent task.

### **Postgraduate studies in the service of health**

The establishment of doctoral studies in the field of medical science is an achievement of modern Europe and the developed world. This is a logical step in the education of health care workers as this creates conditions for development of health science and a PhD degree. This would provide us with the scientific and scientific-educational personnel from the fields of health science. University programs at faculties of health sciences were created out of a need for educational equivalence and development of certain health care professions in the world, and due to the requirements of world health organizations for dynamic changes in higher education.

Today in Bosnia and Herzegovina there are no university lecturers of health sciences at an assistant professor level - an individual who has an MA and a PhD degree as well as appropriate scientific publications from the field of health sciences. In fact this is a determined disruption of the “vicious circle” that led us behind the rest of the world: if we do not have teachers, we can not have faculties, but if we do not have faculties (including postgraduate studies), we can not have teachers. Students of health studies who finish university graduate programs, for different reasons, lag behind medicine students in their scientific education and this should be kept in mind during organization of their postgraduate programs.

Continuous education, together with renewal and adoption of the latest knowledge, provides constant monitoring and identification of health care priorities in the country and the European environment. Postgraduate studies should focus on research work and thesis writing, while formal instructions should be kept at a minimum. Instruction should be specific, designed for individual needs and therefore very flexible, and rely

on elective courses outside the indigenous faculty and university. Therefore, all forms of instruction should rest on principles and techniques of evidence-based medicine.

The aim of “nursing” education in EU is quality health care, in the centre of which is the patient, who is nurtured by an interdisciplinary team. The emphasis of education is on evidence based practice, quality improvement and the intensive use of health information technology. After adopting the Bologna reform this educational strategy became compulsory in Europe. The vast majority of European educational programs emphasise that contemporary educated nurses have, besides assisting physicians, tasks of determining the patient’s needs and the nursing care schedule, as well as assessing the outcome of the nursing care. In order to carry out all of the above mentioned tasks, it is recommended to:

- introduce compulsory university education for nurses,
- define the elements of nursing practice,
- develop clinical competences and practice based learning, with an emphasis on health care in the curricula,
- determine basic practical skills,
- develop evidence based research.

The postgraduate doctoral studies are organized with the aim of enriching our own scientific potentials by creating teaching professionals, who have the highest academic level of education. Obtaining the academic degree in postgraduate studies, health care professionals will earn diplomas whose value is equivalent to those obtained at other faculties. The primary aim of the postgraduate study program is to qualify students for scientific and clinical research, prepare them for work at the faculty, as well as for a teaching career at the university with the ability to create modern and innovative concepts and approaches aimed to improve the quality of life of individuals, organizations and society.

A doctoral degree in the field of medical sciences is essential for an academic career at the faculties of health sciences. In fact, the law stipulates that the Faculty of Health Studies must have qualified lecturers, in this case university educated nurses and other health care professions.

Tasks of the postgraduate program in medical sciences are:

- enabling critical understanding of theoretical and methodological concepts,
- training students for independent, interdisciplinary research,
- creating new and relevant knowledge by verifying the current and discovering new solutions,
- development of critical thinking based on scientific research evidence,
- inclusion of international institutions in research and quality control studies.

The primary aim of the postgraduate study program is to qualify students for clinical research, prepare them for teaching and enable them to form modern and innovative concepts and approaches. Scientific and research work should focus on the health care science and ways to modify medical practice, and all for the purpose of integral and multidisciplinary battle for health. The role of an educated health care worker in the process of prevention and treatment is extremely important and indispensable.

## Conclusion

In the continuous battle for health the Faculty of Health Studies becomes a necessity and has an obligation in education of various health personnel due to acquiring practical and theoretical skills, as well as abilities in providing the best possible health care. The path of knowledge has been present at our faculty for 17 years and it is carried out through a variety of undergraduate and graduate studies, and as of this years through our postgraduate program. Besides the education of health personnel we wanted to offer to our current and former students, and their educators the possibility of publishing their work, so since May 2015, regularly, twice a year, the electronic journal Health Bulletin is published by the Faculty of Health Studies. Due to required knowledge, a highly educated health care worker becomes an indispensable link in the process of prevention and treatment. The above facts acknowledge that the Faculty of Health Studies is absolutely in the service of health.

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## Contribution of individual authors:

Dragan Babić: concept of the paper, literature search, writing the manuscript;  
Ivan Vasilj: concept of the paper;  
Mladen Mimica: concept of the paper;  
All authors participated in the final revision of the manuscript and approved it.

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