

Elective course «Medicine in Literature» as a means of medical students' professional ethical culture formation

E.V. Ganyushkina^{1*}, *M.V. Zolotova*², and *T.G. Mukhina*³

¹ National Research Lobachevsky State University of Nizhny Novgorod, Nizhny Novgorod, Russia

² National Research Lobachevsky State University of Nizhny Novgorod, Nizhny Novgorod, Russia

³ National Research Lobachevsky State University of Nizhny Novgorod, Nizhny Novgorod, Russia; Novosibirsk Military Institute of National Guard Troops, Novosibirsk, Russia; The Academy of Law Management of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia, Ryazan, Russia

Abstract. The article considers the pedagogical conditions that ensure the effectiveness of the formation of professional and ethical culture of students in medical specialties. The medical humanities have an important role to play in the humanization of medical education and practice. The authors believe that humanitarian training of medical students should occupy a sufficient place in their educational process; literature in particular can contribute to the formation of a humane specialist. The role of literature is to develop medical students' abilities to listen, interpret, and communicate. Besides, literary works stimulate students' sensitive appreciation of the ethical dimensions of medical practice and their critical thinking skills. These abilities and skills are of significant importance for the patient care quality. The elective course «Medicine in Literature» integrated into the medical education at Lobachevsky University is aimed at fostering necessary in the profession humanistic qualities such as mercy, responsiveness, sympathy, empathy. Conducted questionnaire survey among the medical students at Lobachevsky University proved the necessity of developing of professionally significant humanistic personality qualities through the study of literature.

1 A problem statement

At present, according to the regulatory documents of FSES of HE (Federal State Educational Standards of Higher Education), higher education institutions are obliged to prepare competitive and highly competent professionals with both professional knowledge and skills (hard skills), as well as universal skills: the ability to learn, process information and apply new technologies, to think critically and to solve problems creatively (soft skills). Developed competencies help specialists to successfully adapt and master the continuously updated requirements of their professional space. In addition, the moral and ethical qualities of specialists also have rather high requirements. Thus, in the professional standards of

* Corresponding author: prof-ped.gpa@mail.ru

medical specialties 31.05.01 «General Medicine» and 31.05.03 «Dentistry» general professional competence (GPC-4) is included, according to which a graduate who has mastered the specialty program should be ready to implement ethical and deontological principles in professional activities. Moreover, one of the two key tasks of the Russian National Project «Education» (implementation of the project up to 31.12.2024) is the education of a harmoniously developed and socially responsible personality based on the ethical and moral values of the peoples of the Russian Federation, their historical and national traditions.

In July 2020 the State Duma of the Russian Federation approved and adopted amendments to the Federal Law «On Education in the Russian Federation», one of which is on determining the system of organizing the upbringing process of students. According to the law, the upbringing process is defined as «activities aimed at the personality development creating conditions for self-determination and socialization of students on the basis of socio-cultural, ethical and moral values and rules, and norms of behavior adopted in Russian society in the interests of the person, family, society and the state ...» The amendment adds a patriotic context to this definition «...the formation of a sense of patriotism and citizenship among students, respect for the memory of the defenders of the Fatherland and the heroic deeds of the Heroes of the Fatherland, to the law and order, to a person of labor and the older generation, mutual respect, careful attitude to the cultural heritage and traditions of the multinational peoples of the Russian Federation, nature and the environment». The law discloses the mechanism for organizing and integrating upbringing process by including into the main educational program a scheduled plan of upbringing activities with students.

Thus, the ethical and moral education of a specialist as the main task of pedagogy, put forward by great K.D. Ushinsky [1], comes to the fore in professional medical education.

The process of becoming a specialist in a higher medical school is largely based on the ideas of a wonderful doctor and educator N.I. Pirogov: «Every teacher should first of all understand that the role of science is not only in providing students with new knowledge and information hidden in it - sometimes deeply, and therefore unnoticed by a superficial observer - another important element is its upbringing process» [2].

In general, upbringing process in the university is understood as the process of collaborative activities of teachers and students focused on developing professionally significant personality qualities in future specialists.

The profession of a doctor is of the type «person-person», an indispensable condition of which is close communication and interaction with people, primarily with patients and their relatives, as well as with colleagues. The area of professional activity of a doctor includes preserving a patient's life and restoring health, preventing diseases, alleviating patient's sufferings from incurable diseases. To successfully perform professional work, the doctor needs the ability to communicate with people, establish rapport and maintain trusting relationship with patients. The doctor needs to have emotional stability and the ability to understand other people, show empathy, benevolence, observation, optimism, responsibility, unselfishness. These personal qualities, significant in the medical profession, affect the quality of the clinical work performed. Thus, the problem of providing necessary pedagogical conditions for upbringing a professional and competent doctor is a key one of this study.

1.1 The objective of the work

The problem of professional and ethical education of an individual, socially and morally responsible specialist has always attracted increasing attention of researchers. The theoretical basis for the study is the work into moral and ethical aspects of professional

culture of the following researchers G.V. Bezrodnaya, G.I. Belyakova, V.S. Bibler, E.N. Bogdanov, L.N. Kogan, N.S. Kuznetsov, F.V. Nikolajevskaya, E.G. Silyajeva, I.V. Sharova, V.M. Shepel, F.N. Scherbak, V.A. Yadov etc [3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9]. According to M.A. Martynova, the professional and personal culture of a doctor is «a complex social characteristic, an indicator of the level of his ethical, moral and intellectual development, high professionalism, and development of professionally significant moral and deontological personality qualities» [10]. The authors' analysis of foreign pedagogical studies showed that the upbringing process of professionally significant personality qualities and the formation of a professional and personal culture of medical students are more effective through the medical humanities [11, 12]. The medical humanities refer to an interdisciplinary cluster that includes humanities (literature, philosophy, ethics, history, religion), social sciences (anthropology, cultural studies, psychology, sociology, medical law) and art (theater, cinema, fine arts). The medical humanities help to form a system of professional values and a culture of professional behavior among future doctors, to develop a reflexive attitude to life and oneself. Currently, medical humanities are included in the educational programs of the world's leading medical universities in America, Australia, and European countries. Taking into account international experience, it can be concluded that there has been a rethinking of the importance of the medical humanities in medical education and their role in the humanitarian education of the future specialist. That is, innovation has occurred through a well-known tradition [13]. Thus, the relevance of this study is due to the normative and social requirements for the quality of training students in medical specialties at the university, which is aimed not only at vocational training, but, first of all, at the professional formation of a specialist, an important component of which is a professional and ethical culture. Obviously, the improvement of the educational and upbringing processes at the university with an emphasis on the formation of a professional and ethical culture will make it possible to qualitatively prepare graduates for practical professional activities [14]. The objective of our study was to develop an elective course «Medicine in Literature» as a means of forming the professional and ethical culture of medical students at Lobachevsky University. The hypothesis was that a set of pedagogical conditions could ensure the effective formation of a professional and ethical culture of medical students, which combine focused, ethically oriented educational and upbringing activities. The integration of the authors' elective course «Medicine in Literature» into the curriculum would strengthen the humanitarian component of the educational and upbringing process at Lobachevsky University.

2 Results of the research

To solve the objective the method of theoretical analysis of conducted pedagogical research, empirical methods and diagnostic methods of scientific research were used.

Experimental work was carried out on the basis of the Institute of Biology and Biomedicine of the National Research Nizhny Novgorod State University named after N.I. Lobachevsky. The study involved 510 foreign students (of whom 178 were freshmen and 332 were sophomores) studying in the specialties 31.05.01 «General Medicine» and 31.05.03 «Dentistry».

At the Institute of Biology and Biomedicine of Lobachevsky University training program in the specialties 31.05.01 «General Medicine» and 31.05.03 «Dentistry» includes such disciplines as «Bioethics», «History of Medicine», «Public Health and Healthcare», «Law» and other humanities and social disciplines, where students discuss moral, ethical and legal issues. In the course of theoretical training students get acquainted with moral and ethical standards and values of medical activity, what is more a system of knowledge about the norms and rules of behavior of a doctor is learned. A mandatory component of the

educational process is clinical practice in the formation of professional practical skills and abilities, as well as the professional and ethical behavior of a doctor. As part of their practical training students develop their paradigm for the ethical behavior as future doctors, based on the behavior models of physicians [15].

However, in our opinion, insufficient hours are allocated to educational humanitarian disciplines that directly affect the development of the professional and ethical culture of future doctors. Thus, contact classes in the Bioethics discipline are held in the amount of 16 academic hours and 92 hours are distributed to students' autonomous work. We see a solution to the problem of forming a professional and ethical culture of future doctors in integrating medical humanities into the main educational program, strengthening the humanitarian focus in teaching theoretical and clinical disciplines, humanizing the environment for the development of the student's personality, that is, all aspects of the life of a higher educational institution.

The inclusion in the educational program of the university of the authors' elective course «Medicine in Literature» will contribute to the upbringing of key professionally significant qualities of the doctor's personality: humane attitude towards a patient, tolerance and empathy. Literature is one of the few effective tools for teaching humanism [16]. The integration of literature and medicine has great educational and upbringing potential. Unfortunately, in modern medical practice there is a process of «disappearance» of the patient as a personality and his transformation into an object of manipulation, control, submission. The elective course aims to develop the ability of medical students to see a person in a patient and an individual with his fears and pain, rather than an interesting clinical case or digital display reflecting the results of various diagnostic studies. The literature will teach medical students to avoid depersonalization of patients and will increase sympathy, empathy and compassion in medical students [17]. In relation to the profession of a doctor, empathy implies the ability of a doctor to «penetrate» the patient's head, into his thoughts, feelings, sufferings, experiences, fears and pain, in order to really help and cure. Empathy is a personal quality that is extremely difficult to nurture and constantly display it in clinical work. Doctor of Medicine, Professor at Stanford University, the author of successful medical novels Abraham Verghese has been preaching the principle of empathy towards patients all his life and believes that «in medical schools it is not so much necessary to teach empathy as such, but to teach how to preserve it» [18]. It should be noted, taking into account the opinion of Abraham Verghese, that it is possible to preserve and develop empathy, benevolence and soulfulness only through literary works and works of art.

Studying works of literature medical students analyze the behavior and various shades of the mental states of book characters; consider and discuss acute general medical problems, which help them sharpen their critical thinking skills. Reading literary works, reflecting the realities of medical practice contribute to the personal and professional growth of medical students. Medical writers (A.P. Chekhov, V.V. Veresaev, M.A. Bulgakov, A.J. Cronin, Richard Gordon, A.M. Motorov, Henry Marsh, etc.) share their experience in their books, give advice, and warn against medical errors.

Reading literary works on medical subjects contribute to the development of students' clinical thinking, formation of social and ethical responsibility for their decisions made. Literary works demonstrate true human and medicine values and how they manifest themselves in real life in a certain historical and cultural context. Studying literary texts prepares medical students for a variety of clinical situations, offering possible behaviors, but does not dictate the only correct one, prompts them to critically reflect on these behaviors, based on professional values. Literature teaches medical students to think, reason, feel and behave humanely and responsibly in a particular clinical situation. Students emotionally empathize with the main characters, critically analyze and evaluate how the

heroes in the books solve moral dilemmas and the consequences of their decisions [19]. Obviously, literature does not offer ready-made professional-specific models of behavior of doctors, but contributes to a critical awareness of oneself, other people and the world. By stimulating reflection, literature allows students to question the established understanding of the relationship between physicians and patients, physicians and other healthcare professionals and staff, physicians and society. Literature helps students realize that medical professionalism is closely linked to humanism, as doctors and patients understand it [20].

Moreover, the study of literary works develops in medical students a habit of close reading, which is the key reading skill. The method of close reading not only develops students' critical thinking skills, but also creates an attentive and thoughtful reader with a pencil in his hand. Close reading is a method of thoughtful working on a complex text analyzing its structure and gradually penetrating into its meaning, and investigating why the author included this or that element in the text. The close reading skill is likely to form an observational and thoughtful doctor who has to elicit details from the speech and physical condition of his patient that are significant for making a correct diagnosis. For effective clinical practice, physicians need to be very attentive to verbal and non-verbal information from their patients. Physicians trained in close reading are more likely to continue to think about their patients by analyzing and interpreting the information received from a patient and comparing it with the clinical examination results. Meeting the patient, as well as close reading, first requires careful observation and then appropriate in-depth analysis and interpretation. Close reading helps a clinician avoid misconceptions, stereotyping and superficial interpretations, and therefore medical errors. Thus, close reading develops medical professionalism and professional culture.

The study of literature within the elective course takes place on the basis of a value-functional approach, the essence of which is that the literary text is not analyzed in itself, but in its interaction with the reader for whom it is intended, through the prism of interaction, as the dialectical unity of aesthetic material and its readership interpretation. Thus, the text is not considered as a «thing in itself», but taking into account the aesthetic attitude of the reader to the work, his moral needs, the system of values that the text possesses, and what is actually perceived [21].

Working on literary texts has a problematic and searching character in which the development of independent thought and the emotional activity of students are stimulated. The creation of problem situations is especially important for their ethical development, and search tasks that require evidence encourage students to turn directly to the analysis of the text. Each literary text of the elective course proposed for the analysis is accompanied by tasks of both analytical and creative nature. The leading methods of cooperative work of students and teachers are discovery learning (the way to find a solution to the search problem) and research learning (preparation of messages, reports, essays, etc., on a given topic and their discussion in classes). The use of interactive methods and technologies contributes to increasing the level of educational and professional motivation of students and the formation of cross-curriculum competencies. Students have an internal understanding of the issues of the text, develop a research-critical attitude to it and a readiness for independent evaluation judgments. Moreover, during discussions and debates students improve their speaking skills [22].

We understand that professional and ethical culture of a physician is not only a complex of certain ethical knowledge, abilities, skills, but also the system of the values, properties of the personality necessary for successful medical practice and manifested in specific types of professional interaction, professional actions and professional behavior. In the structure of the doctor's professional and ethical culture, we have identified the following components: 1) motivational and value-based (awareness of the importance of observing ethical

standards and values in professional activity, orientation towards professional self-improvement); 2) cognitive (knowledge of ethical principles and moral standards of professional medical behavior, embedded in regulatory documents); 3) activity (realization of ethical values and principles in professional activity); 4) reflexive-evaluation (reflection and regulation of one's own professional behavior). In the course of the study, we came to the conclusion that the elective course «Medicine in Literature» contributes to the formation and development of the above components of the doctor's professional and ethical culture. The elective course as a value-semantic component of the educational process performs a personality-creative function, forming a personality and a professional with a stable value system and ethical behavior.

In order to determine the purpose, tasks, content and ways of implementing work on the professional and ethical education of future doctors, a survey of foreign medical students at IBBM was conducted. The survey, which was attended by foreign students of the first and second years of IBBM, determined the motives and reasons for choosing a doctor's profession, the degree of awareness of the significance of the chosen profession and the attitude of students towards it.

Choosing answers to the question (such as «several out of several») «Why did you decide to become a doctor? » the absolute majority of students (94.9%) explain the choice of profession by the desire to help people, 59.3% of respondents consider the profession of a doctor respected in their homeland, half of respondents noted that they have abilities and inclinations to the profession of a doctor, 28.8% of students chose the profession of a doctor because it is well paid, 23.7% of students decided to continue the family tradition, the same number of students 23.7% chose another explanation. 73% of respondents are morally ready to work in extreme conditions, in the so-called dangerous red zone with patients infected with COVID-19. As the survey showed, the most common motive for obtaining higher medical education is the combination of the desire to serve society (medical assistance to unhealthy fellow citizens) with the aspirations of personal high social status and a successful career (the privileged position of a doctor in society). Further, students were asked to evaluate a set of professionally significant personality qualities characteristic to the physician's profession (ideal model), ranking them according to the degree of importance and to determine on a 5-point scale the severity of these qualities in themselves (real model). Assessing the importance of certain qualities, 53% of students preferred professional knowledge and skills, and 47% preferred vocational and ethical qualities (16% - communicative skills, 14% - benevolence, 9% - responsiveness and empathy, 8% - discipline, organization). In reality, most students rated their professional knowledge and skills at 1 point. Most of the respondents rated their discipline at 2 points and benevolence and empathy at 4 points. Students put the highest score for their communication skills. The responses received indicate a lack of understanding among students of the humanism of medicine. Highly appreciating the expression of the proposed ethical qualities of the person at home, students do not consider them to be professional. However, students recognize the need to further develop their moral qualities: to the question «Do you think that you need to increase your level of moral culture in order to become a good doctor? » 74% of respondents answered in the affirmative. This indicates that most students realize that their own level of moral culture is insufficient and that morality is the basis of medical activity. For 74% of respondents, the Hippocratic Oath is an important ethical code of medical practitioners today. The students are focused on self-development and professional and personal growth.

The analysis of students' answers to a block of questions about the role of literature in their lives revealed the problem of fading interest in reading. The majority of respondents (64%) read compulsory educational and reference literature, scientific articles. The reading circle of 26% of students is expanded, mainly due to modern fashion bestsellers and

detectives. The vast majority of students agree that literature plays an important role in personal development, professional formation, and readiness for a successful professional career. The created elective course will have a positive effect on stimulating the interest of students in reading.

3 Conclusions

Thus, it should be noted that the development of a professional and ethical culture among future doctors, as one of the priority tasks of higher professional medical education, requires appropriate work to update and search for theoretical and methodological ways and means of organizing ethical upbringing in the educational environment of a classical university. The long process of developing the professional and ethical culture of future doctors requires coordination of educational and extracurricular activities and should be carried out continuously from the first to the sixth year of studies, with a gradual complication of educational tasks and an increase in the proportion of students' independence in working out models and situations of future professional medical activities. A pressing task for educators and doctors is to reform medical education and practice, launching the process of returning humanism to medicine. Based on the research results, we admit the importance of the elective course «Medicine in Literature», since it ensures the success of the process of developing a professional and ethical culture among students, as well as increases students' motivation to master their medical skills and improves the quality of preparation of specialists for professional activities. A further study in order to increase the humanitarian component of medical education as an important factor in the upbringing a humane specialist seems very promising.

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