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SOCIAL PEDIATRICS TEACHING AT THE
INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S CENTRE

by

Dr. Etienne Berthet

The lack of qualified personnel impedes the efforts of most countries in the world to achieve their public health and social welfare programmes. It is one of the major tasks of the United Nations and their Specialized Agencies to promote the professional and technical training of social and health personnel. As a result of the experience we gained through missions entrusted to us by the World Health Organization in the Middle East from 1950 to 1954, we studied in several publications the international teaching techniques of medico-social tuberculosis as practised in countries with heavy tuberculosis mortality (1).

The International Children's Centre, since its creation under the impulse of its Executive Director, Professor Robert Debré, has developed an international post-graduate teaching of social pediatrics, with three objectives:

- To help governments solve the difficulties encountered by them in operating their child welfare services, by providing for social and medical personnel training courses on items of interest and of practical application;

(1) Etienne Berthet - L'Enseignement de la tuberculose médico-sociale dans les pays à forte mortalité - Revue Médicale du Moyen-Orient (Beyrouth) 1953, No. 2, pp 199-209

Etienne Berthet - 18 mois de lutte antituberculeuse en Turquie - Un ouvrage de 158 pages publié en langues française et anglaise par la Ligue antituberculeuse d'Istanbul - 1953, pp. 39-54 et 114-123.

Etienne Berthet - Aspects de la lutte contre la tuberculose dans le Moyen-Orient - Journal de Médecine de Leysin - 1953, No. 6

- to bring together in international seminars persons from different parts of the world to determine some of the problems connected with social pediatrics;
- to facilitate contacts between health and social workers by affording them several opportunities to meet and to exchange their views in seminars, working groups and study sessions.

The teaching given at the International Children's Centre is directed in accordance with the Centre's own concept of social pediatrics, i.e., to apply to the child the principles of social medicine, which entails:

- A full integration of maternal and child welfare in overall public health and social welfare programmes developed by governments;
- a comprehensive concept of maternal and child welfare problems, as each subject is dealt with in all its biological, psychological, social and economic aspects;
- a team work enlisting all disciplines which may help to achieve the child's welfare and to promote and develop his personality in his social and family environment.

Like social medicine, social pediatrics is a continuous process which should always be adapted to the needs of the child, as these may vary according to each epoch, to the various regions and to the resources of the community amongst which he is brought up.

The training courses of the International Children's Centre have two main objectives:

- To determine the most recent technical advances, to discuss these new data and to consider their practical application in the field of activity of each participant;
- to provide the listeners not only with a supplementary education but also to initiate them in practical work methods both accurate and dynamic. At a time like this, whose

characteristic is the "acceleration of History" and where such is the rapidity of technical progress that in our every day work we always run the risk to be behind a new discovery, it is **incumbent** on us to prepare the social and health personnel to a permanent effort of adaptation and improvement.

Such a teaching will be effective only ~~in so far~~ as the participants will gain the desire and the will to work more and better, to use their imagination and to properly combat routinism which, in all countries, is the main obstacle to social progress.

The international post-graduate teaching provided by the International Children's Centre has developed and improved day after day thanks to the team work of all those who participated in it, and more particularly to Professor Henry Bonnet who is responsible, since 1950, for the supervision of the Teaching Service.

From 1950 to 1957, the International Children's Centre organized fifty training courses on the various medical, psychological and social aspects of maternal and child welfare. These courses were attended by 1.343 listeners from 93 countries or territories. As an example we are quoting below a list of the courses planned for 1958:

Curriculum of the training courses in 1958

- Course on "creches", nurseries and infant homes (6 January-2 February).
- Course on social pediatrics for countries in the process of development, to be held at Dakar (10 February-30 March).
- Course on the prevention and treatment of children's tuberculosis, in English and French (24 February-30 March).
- Course on social pediatrics (14 April - 6 July).
- Course on nutrition (15 September-12 October).
- Course on maternal and child care problems, for social and administrative personnel (13 October-21 December).
- Course on maternal and child care, intended to African midwives, at Dakar (from January to June).

Training on the prevention of tuberculosis for physicians from the British Commonwealth attending the tuberculosis course of the Cardiff University (November).

An international teaching bringing together listeners from all parts of the world must always entail several difficulties, the most important of which, numbering five, are the following:

- (1) The basic education of the participants, their professional background, their technical abilities, their personalities are widely variable and such is their interest in the various problems studied. For instance, trachoma control looks less interesting to a Scandinavian physician than to an African, and vice versa; deficiencies in maternal care will be of more interest to a European than to an Asiatic. However, experience showed that such contacts between persons from countries with very different technical development are not only a unique source of information for all concerned but also a way to improve their knowledge, and have a wider scope than individual personality, since there is no country, whatever poor, which may not have something to contribute. This very fruitful concept of intellectual and spiritual exchanges is certainly one of the most beneficial aspects of the teaching provided by the International Children's Centre and one of those which have the widest bearing from the international standpoint.
- (2) The preparation of curricula is a work requiring much time in which participate, with the teaching supervisor, several personalities belonging to the University and to official and private social and health care institutions. Such a preparation involves several preliminary meetings and frequent contacts with the professors and educators in charge of teaching and teaching supervision. The members of the Executive Board take an active part in this preparation as well as the heads of the various

technical sections of the International Children's Centre.

Moreover, representatives from International Agencies in the Technical Advisory Committee provide a valuable co-operation in the preparation and development of the teaching programmes.

- (3) The selection of the participants is the responsibility of governmental and international organizations. Experience shows that such a selection is excellent in the majority of cases. However, in view of the lack of health and social personnel in many countries, it is unavoidable that homogeneity in the same course be not complete, and such an inconvenience has less bearing on group discussions than on the determination of the level at which the lectures have to be maintained.
- (4) The teaching techniques have the twofold objective to maintain a balance:
- (a) Between the different medical, psychological, social and economic aspects of children's problems, since none of these problems should be neglected to the detriment of the others, with due emphasis on potentialities in the field of public health and social welfare.
 - (b) Between the different teaching techniques (lectures, group discussions, visits to institutions, films, library work). The technical training provided by the International Children's Centre is increasingly resorting to the actual methods by which the participants take an active part in the teaching, and contribute their personal experiences with their usual share of success and failure. This is, thus, a true mutual teaching in the form of directed discussions, as the teacher plays an essential role by enlivening and guiding the discussions in order to avoid the inconvenience which is sometimes involved in such teaching methods, namely, an empty and fruitless talk.

- (5) The evaluation of an international teaching is always a complex work. It may be envisaged at two stages:
- (a) Short-term evaluation during the discussion meetings which systematically close all the courses at the Centre and enable the participants to freely express their views about the contents, the form and the value of the teaching given to them.
 - (b) Long-term evaluation through contacts maintained by the International Children's Centre with former participants, which help to follow up their work after their return to their countries, and to determine the extent to which they benefited of the teaching given to them at the Centre.

Organizing the participants' everyday life is the constant concern of the International Children's Centre whose aim is to devote to each one the maximum interest in order to enable him to benefit at best of the teaching he is receiving. The participants in the courses are either Fellows or free listeners. For instance, from 1950 to 1957, out of 1,343 listeners, 847 were International Children's Centre Fellows, 193 World Health Organization Fellows, 145 Fellows from various institutions, and 152 free listeners.

When the Fellows are nominated the teaching supervisor directly contacts each one of them and sends him the curriculum together with all practical information regarding the material arrangements made for him. The Fellows are requested to collect a documentation on the national achievements of their respective countries, as they will have to submit it to, and discuss it with, the participants in the courses. A great importance is given to the way the Fellows are met on their arrival, the more as many of them come for the first time in contact with a foreign country whose language, customs and way of life are not quite familiar to them.

Throughout the course, which generally gathers from 30 to 35 participants, this care to follow them up is maintained. The teaching supervisor and his immediate collaborators (three educators, two for the technical problems and one for the administrative questions) live permanently with the Fellows, prepare and guide the lectures, the group discussions, the visits to institutions and the study travels. Some members of the Executive Board and of the technical and advisory committee as well as all the heads of the technical services of the International Children's Centre actively participate in the teaching. The documentation centre puts at the disposal of the participants all references they may need, and a librarian is especially assigned to each course to assist the Fellows in their research for documents. Likewise, the participants are initiated in the various medico-biological, medico-social and social research works which are carried out at the International Children's Centre.

During the few weeks or the few months of duration of the courses the participants lead a community life which is of great value from the point of view of international understanding. They are accommodated by the International Children's Centre and grouped in the same hotels where every morning a special bus picks them up and takes them to various institutions and hospitals where they carry out practical training works. By the end of the morning, they come back to the Château de Longchamp, which is the headquarters of the International Children's Centre, where after lunching together they devote their afternoon to a theoretical teaching, to study meetings, to group discussions, to film shows and to documentation work.

When they return to their countries, the Fellows maintain their relations with the International Children's Centre. They keep the teaching supervisor informed of their professional activities and ask for the various services which may be rendered to them by the different technical sections, including the documentation centre. It is to be noted that each participant receives a mimeographed summary of the whole theoretical teaching and of the study meetings which took place throughout the course.

The International Children's Centre has decentralized its teaching. Courses and seminars have been organized in countries in process of development, particularly in Africa, thanks to the assistance of Dr. Maurice Gaud, the technical adviser to the centre and Dr. Jean Senecal, Professor of pediatrics at the Dakar University.

For the first time in Africa, a course on social pediatrics was organized for 25 physicians by the International Children's Centre during the academic year 1956-57. The curriculum mainly included problems of public health, of prophylaxis of severe African endemics, of nutrition and social welfare, applied to maternal and child care. International organizations (UNICEF, FAO, WHO) and the Ministry of Overseas France (de la France d'Outre-Mer) contributed to this teaching to which a great number of personalities from Paris and Dakar gave their participation.

A further course on social pediatrics will take place at Dakar from 10 February to 30 March 1958. A third course is scheduled for 1959 in Belgian Congo at Leopoldville.

Since 1954 a training course for African midwives is being held every year at Dakar. The curriculum of this course is focused on public health, nursing, child care and health education. Its objective is to enable the midwives to play in their everyday work a more important role than that of delivery specialists, and to participate in the effort undertaken in their field of activity to achieve maternal and child care.

A training of maternal care auxiliary workers has been organized at the maternal and child health centre of Dakar. This teaching meets two urgent needs: first, to provide African girls and young women with basic knowledge of hygiene, infant care and home management; then, to train an auxiliary personnel able to co-operate in the activities of the maternal and child health centre.

In the teaching developed by the International Children's Centre much emphasis is put on the health education of the public.

Such a health education aims not only at giving people a minimum essential knowledge for the growth and development of children, but also at creating "a healthy mind" and healthy life reflexes, and at making everybody aware of his individual, social and family responsibilities. Health education thus becomes a true social education intended to improve the family's and community's welfare. Bearing this in mind, we extensively developed the teaching of the principles and techniques of health education in all our courses, and we undertook to hold seminars for the teaching staff, since our objective is to try developing with the co-operation of schoolmasters and schoolmistresses a methodology of health education both for the pupils and their parents.

In co-operation with the Institute of Social Pediatrics at the Paris University and the Department of University and School Health at the Ministry of National Education, a social pediatrics teaching is organized every year by the physicians in charge of school health in various parts of France. Finally, we should like to point out that three international training courses on school health problems were set up in 1955 for doctors. in 1956 for educators and in 1957 for school assistants.

With this same purpose in view, the International Children's Centre participated in the first African seminar on health education of the public organized by the World Health Organization at Dakar in 1957. (1)

In addition to its training courses, the International Children's Centre holds every year international Seminars devoted to the study of a medical or social problem of present interest.

At a time where international Congresses gather thousands of participants, the International Children's Centre maintains a modest but none the less effective rule to help determining certain up-to-date problems, i.e., the meeting of a limited number of international personalities particularly aware of the problems involved to exchange during a few days their respective views and experiences.

(1) E. Berthet: "Plan de réalisation pratique d'un programme d'éducation sanitaire dans une communauté rurale".
J. Sénécal: "Rôle de l'éducation en matière de santé dans les programmes de protection maternelle et infantile".
(Reports submitted to the Seminar on health education in Africa organized by the WHO African Office at Dakar from 25 to 30 March 1957)

Such seminars, which are arranged by our collaborator, Dr. Nathalie P. Masse form afterwards the object of publications, with a view to widely disseminating the items dealt with. (1)

In 1956-57 the International Children's Centre held four seminars of which three in Paris and one in Brazil, at Rio de Janeiro:

- (1) Seminar on children's hospitals (Paris, 7-9 June 1956) under the honorary chairmanship of Dr. Leclainche, Director-General of Public Assistance, Paris.
- (2) Seminar on the epidemiology and prevention of acute articular rheumatism (Paris, 25-27 Sept. 1956) under the chairmanship of Professor D. Rutstein of the Harvard University (Boston)
- (3) Seminar on primary tuberculosis of children (Rio de Janeiro, 20-25 Oct. 1957) under the chairmanship of Professor R. Debré.
- (4) Seminar on whooping-cough (Paris, 16-18 Dec. 1957) under the chairmanship of Professor R. Debré.

Two meetings are planned for 1958:

- (1) A seminar on the study techniques of BCG vaccine will be held in Paris from 22-25 September 1958, in co-operation with the International Union for Tuberculosis Control under the chairmanship of Professor A. Frappier from Montreal.
- (2) A Seminar on the children's problems in Mediterranean regions is being prepared with the co-operation of the Medical Sciences International Organizations Board and the Unitarian Service Committee. It is scheduled for the beginning of December 1958.

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- (1) The last publications issued are the following:
 - Compte rendu du séminaire sur les hôpitaux d'enfants, Revue de l'Assistance Publique de Paris, janvier-février 1957.
 - Compte rendu du séminaire sur l'épidémiologie et la prévention du rhumatisme articulaire aigu, Numéro spécial de la Revue du Rhumatisme, 1957.
 - Compte rendu du séminaire sur le traitement de la tuberculose de l'enfant, organisé du 7 au 10 décembre 1955 sous la présidence du Pr. Cruickshank, publié par le CIE.

It is perhaps the most essential mission of the International Children's Centre to afford international organizations, governments and private institutions, several opportunities to improve their medical and social personnel's standard in the various fields connected with child care.

At a time like this, where the mental mechanism of mankind is so obviously out of order, the International Children's Centre acts as a symbol of international co-operation and represents a meeting place affording a soothing atmosphere of work and friendship, which enables everybody to contribute to the maximum of his abilities with a view to justifying the expectation of those who set up this organization. This is what Professor Robert Debré pointed out during the official opening of the Centre on 13 January 1950, in the following terms:

"The International Children's Centre which has quite a special character and is French by its legal status and its nationality, intends however to act as an international body put by the French Government at the disposal and at the service of the United Nations Specialized Institutions and of all maternal and child care organizations throughout the world. We do hope that all will co-operate in this undertaking and help the International Children's Centre, and we whole-heartedly do want that all may receive from this Centre the largest possible assistance, it will be able to offer them. Established as an information, a teaching and a mutual assistance organization, the International Children's Centre, which is a co-operation institution, hopes to help improving the conditions of all the child population in the world."