Child and adolescent psychiatry in Ukraine

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1. Definition, historical development, and current situation

Definition

It is traditional in the Ukraine to understand child psychiatry as a subdivision of general psychiatry which studies the peculiarities of etiology, pathogenesis, epidemiology, clinical picture, and the course and outcome of mental dysfunctions in children, as well as the peculiarities of their treatment, disease prevention, and organization of psychiatric help to children.

Adolescent psychiatry is a subdivision of general psychiatry that deals with specific manifestation, course, causes, and mechanisms in mental disturbance development in the period of sexual maturation, as well as the peculiarities of their treatment and prevention at that age and basics of psychiatric help organization for adolescents.

Child psychiatry in this country formed itself into a separate field of general psychiatry only in the 1920s, while adolescent psychiatry developed into a separate field as child and adult psychiatry only in the 1970s. Before that time the younger adolescents were supervised by child psychiatrists and the older ones by those who dealt with the adult patients.

In accordance with the existing laws and regulations in the Ukraine at present (1995) the following professions are singled out: a child psychiatrist and adolescent psychiatrist. However, such specializations as child or adolescent psychotherapy are not singled out separately. This kind of psychiatric activity is taken up either by child and adolescent psychiatrists who get additional training in psychotherapy, or by psychotherapists dealing with adults.

Historical development

Child and adolescent psychiatry in the Ukraine is closely connected with the development of these disciplines in Russia. The reason lies in the fact that the Ukraine was incorporated early into the Russian Empire (1654–1917) and later into the USSR (1918–1991). That is why it is quite difficult to single out independent stages of development of the child and adolescent psychiatry in the Ukraine.

From historical manuscripts, it is known that in the times of Kievan Rus (9th–13th centuries) mental patients and feeble-minded individuals were rendered primitive types of help at monasteries. The monks at the Kievo-Pechersky Monastery (Kiev) had started caring after such patients. In medieval times Russia had religious and
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mystic notions of the mental illness, but the attitude toward the mentally ill was milder and more tolerant than in Western Europe at that time. In 1554, Ivan the Terrible, the Russian czar, issued a statute where he demanded that the monasteries should treat carefully the feeble-minded. Such help was provided for the mental patients up to the 18th century. In 1669, a law was passed in Russia which concerned the irresponsibility of the mentally ill and feeble-minded.

The first psychiatric department in Russia was opened in Moscow in 1776 at the Ekaterininskyaya Hospital; it had 26 beds. The first psychiatric departments in Ukraine were organized in Kiev in 1786, then in Kharkiv (1796), Poltava (1803), Kamenets-Podolsky (1835), Odessa (1840), and Kherson (1852). The Maksakovsky Monastery in Chernigiv was turned into an institution for the mental patients in 1776.

At the beginning, psychiatry was not singled out from somatic medicine and was taught by the same professors who were teaching surgery and therapy. In 1834, Kharkiv University undertook the teaching of psychiatry as a separate discipline for the first time in Russia. The teaching was performed by Prof. P A. Butkovsky. The same year he published the first textbook in psychiatry in Russia.

In 1836, Prof. Butkovsky organized the first special school for mentally retarded children in Russia. This school was named the “School at the Hospital Gate”. A similar school was organized in Paris in 1839 by E. Seguin.

The first Medical Institution for treating mentally retarded children and epileptics with recurrent psychomotor excitement was established in 1854 in Riga by Dr. Plats; it housed 30 children.

In 1863 a plan to create a wide network of institutions for retarded children in the Russian Empire was developed. This was done on the initiative of the Chief Administration for the Military Education Establishments. In 1865, all the military secondary schools (gymnasiums) had special “repeating forms” for those who could not cope with the curriculum of the previous academic year and also for those who did not master the curricula of the earlier years. In 1867, all those children who could not progress at the military secondary schools were placed into the special institution called a “progymnasium”. Such progymnasiums were created in many larger cities. In 1873, G. P. Stepanov published a handbook called “Teaching the Dumb and Deaf, Blind, and Mentally Retarded”.

Starting in 1868, a number of cities in the Russian Empire opened “Corrective Educational Establishments”, where children with psychopathological personalities received education.

Due to the change in the political climate in Russia and to the reaction gaining strength in the 1890s, the progymnasiums and some other corrective establishments for children and adolescents were closed.

However, the necessity of educating and caring for mental patients and retarded children became socially meaningful. Thus, according to a 1893 survey of the mentally ill patients in the Moscow Gubernia (administrative unit), there were 3.53 mental patients (mostly oligophrenics and epileptics) per 1,000 children 0–10 years of age.

The end of 1890s and the beginning of the 1900s saw closer attention being given to the items concerning child and adolescent mental health in Russia. Child psychiatric departments were opened in the psychiatric hospitals. The first child