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Articles

The State of the Health Care System in Sochi in middle of 1923 year

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Abstract

This article is devoted to the study of the state of the health care sector in Sochi city in 1923. In the article, the authors analyze the state and problems of the city's health care sector, providing various data on social institutions of the city, such as the city hospital and its surgical department, the city orphanage and the city pharmacy. As research materials, this work uses documents from the Sochi city archive. The research methodology is presented by both general scientific and special historical research methods. In conclusion, the authors note that almost all city medical institutions had a number of problems that required immediate elimination, among which are: lack of inventory and equipment, insufficient supply of medical drugs and dressings, poor infrastructure, as well as poor nutrition of patients.

Keywords: medicine, history of medicine, health care, state of health care, health care problems, Sochi District, Sochi, 1920s.

1. Introduction

Medicine of the present time has significantly advanced in its development, allowing to overcome the difficulties of treatment and prevention of diseases of the population, which were previously insurmountable. Based on this, the study of the history of medicine is an important aspect in understanding the evolution of the processes of formation and development of modern medicine. In this article, the authors propose to consider the issue of the functioning of the health care sector of the city of Sochi in 1923.

The purpose of the study is to analyze the state of the health care sector of the city of Sochi in the middle of 1923.

This article is an attempt by the authors to examine in detail the history of medicine and the health care sector of the city of Sochi in the first half of the 20th century.

2. Materials and methods

The research materials in this paper are the documents of the Sochi City Archive, namely: the minutes of the meeting of the Presidium of the Sochi District Executive Committee, held on July 23, 1923, which contains an act of inspection of the state of the health care sector in the city of Sochi ([SGA. F. R-25. Op. 1. D. 73. L. 69-73](#)).

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The research methodology is based on general scientific and special historical research methods. General scientific research methods are represented by: analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction and the method of content analysis. Special research methods used in the work: historical-typological, historical-genetic method, as well as the narrative method.

3. Discussion

Currently, there are a number of works in Russian historiography that are devoted to the study of various aspects of the city of Sochi at the beginning of the 20th century. Researchers touch upon such topics as state and legal regulation (Natolochnaya, 2011), the development of automobile transport (Rumyantseva, 2012; Cherkasov, 2011), the activities of the police (Gonta, Taran, 2023), the public education system (Romanova i dr., 2023; Bagdasaryan, 2011) and other aspects (Tveritinov, 2024).

However, the state of the healthcare sector during this period was not subjected to a separate and detailed analysis. Thus, this work will organically complement the existing historiography of the city of Sochi, studying new data on its healthcare system.

4. Results

In the period from July 6 to July 12, 1923, a commission of the Black Sea health department consisting of: representative of the Sochi district executive committee V.A. Shpank, representative of the union of all medical and sanitary labor Dr. Kozlov and chairman of the Sochi health department Dr. Zakharov, in the presence of an authorized person of the Sochi health department Dr. V.P. Kester, conducted an audit survey of the state of affairs and reporting of the health department of the city of Sochi (and organizations subordinate to it) (SGA. F. R-25. Op. 1. D. 73. L. 72).

Health Department of the city of Sochi.

The authorized representative of the Black Sea health department for the Sochi region was Dr. Kester. The department office had 2 employees (a secretary and a clerk). The composition of other health institutions is presented in [Table 1](#).

Table 1. Data on the number of employees and places for patients in urban medical institutions (SGA. F. R-25. Op. 1. D. 73. L. 72)

Nº	Subordinate institutions	Number of employees
1.	Malaria outpatient clinic at the health department	1 employee
2.	Orphanage for 25 people	10 employees
3.	City hospital for 35 patients	23 employees
4.	Central outpatient clinic at the city hospital	4 employees
5.	Surgical department of the city hospital for 15 patients	13 employees
6.	Adler hospital for 15 patients	9 employees
7.	Yermolov hospital for 5 patients	5 employees
8.	Khostinsky medical center for 5 patients	1 employee
9.	Krasnopolyansky medical center	1 employee
10.	Loo medical center	1 employee
Total:		100 patient beds and 74 staff.

According to the staffing level approved by the Black Sea Health Department (the estimate was approved by the district Black Sea Health Department for the third quarter of 1923), the entire Sochi district was assigned a staff of 72 employees. The resulting 2 employees in excess of the staffing level – one of whom was supported by local funds (receipts from the outpatient clinic) and two employees received one salary for two for three hours of work per day for each (SGA. F. R-25. Op. 1. D. 73. L. 72).

Financial and economic part.

The book of receipts and expenditures was presented for inspection, which was simultaneously kept together for material and monetary receipts in the form of two columns, and material funds were taken into account in it only in monetary terms, while weight accounting was not carried out. The book was numbered and laced, but not secured with a seal. In addition, receipt and expenditure orders were presented. According to the book entries, the balance in monetary

units on July 1 was expressed in the amount of 10,596 rubles 23 kopecks. For June, 160,378 rubles 54 kopecks were received, 119,524 rubles 99 kopecks were spent, and the balance on July 1 was 51,449 rubles 78 kopecks. By the day of the inspection, no entries in the book for the month of July had been made, and expenses were made from the said balance on July 1, in justification of which documents were presented for 40,588 rubles 04 kopecks. The balance in cash on July 6 was thus expressed in the amount of 10,861 rubles 74 kopecks. When examining the order of keeping the book and documents, the following was noted: Among the presented documents for the amount of 40,588 rubles 04 kopecks there are unexecuted receipts of a temporary nature: for 342 rubles issued to Doctor Flerovsky as additional compensation (without a demand sheet), 2,250 rubles issued to pay off the employees of the Yermolov medical center (until the receipt of a demand sheet with receipts), 4,500 rubles issued under a contract in payment for firewood (there was no act on the acceptance of firewood).

The book entries did not contain references to receipts and expenditure orders, which made both verification and any kind of certificates difficult, and in general the order system lost all meaning. When checking the accuracy of receipt documents under article 165 of the book, it was noted that there was no receipt document for 30,000 rubles received from the Black Sea District Health Department. It was later established that receipt documents for the amounts received were only a rare occurrence, and money from both the Black Sea Health Department and the Sochi Executive Committee and the insurance fund arrived in the overwhelming majority of cases without any accompanying papers ([SGA. F. R-25. Op. 1. D. 73. L. 72](#)).

It is worth noting separately that when reviewing the expenditure documents, extremely low salaries were noticed, paid to employees according to demand sheets, according to the approved rates. Thus, in the city hospital, the salaries of employees were as follows ([Table 2](#)).

Table 2. Salaries of medical personnel ([SGA. F. R-25. Op. 1. D. 73. L. 72ob.](#))

No	Job title	Salary
1.	Senior Doctor	608 rubles
2.	Medical staff	430 rubles
3.	Nurse	280 rubles

However, the salaries of the employees of the department of the authorized representative of the city health department were as follows: Authorized representative of the Black Sea health department special rate 797 rubles with an increase of 200 rubles – a total of 997 rubles. Clerk of the 9th category 297 rubles with an increase of 81 rubles – a total of 378 rubles. Thus, comparing the above rates with the salaries of another institution of the People's Commissariat of Health, located in the Sochi region (SRA – Sochi resort administration), where the payment of medical personnel reached 75 rubles in gold, we can state a significant difference of up to 600%, incomprehensible and unacceptable in the same ministry and especially with similar work ([SGA. F. R-25. Op. 1. D. 73. L. 72ob.](#)).

In the part of the material and inventory reporting there were inventories of the inventory property of the institutions subordinate to the authorized person. The exclusion of unsuitable property was carried out according to the act of the commissions established by the authorized Black Sea health department for the Sochi region.

City pharmacy.

The pharmacy staff consisted of 6 employees. The pharmacy kept monthly turnover sheets to record the receipt and expenditure of medications. When checking the durability of some medications and comparing them with the data on the sheet, the commission established the following ([Table 3](#)).

Table 3. Availability of medicines in the city pharmacy ([SGA. F. R-25. Op. 1. D. 73. L. 72ob.](#))

No	Medicines	Balance as of July 1, 1923 according to documents
1.	Codeine	36 grams
2.	Cocaine	11
3.	Norzin	91,5

Nº	Medicines	Balance as of July 1, 1923 according to documents
4.	Santonin	9,3
5.	Argentum nitr.	97,5
6.	Thiokol	544
7.	Calcium chloride.	960
8.	Quinine	—

The pharmacy's financial receipts for June 1923 amounted to 24,799 rubles 56 kopecks, and due to the increase in the fee to 17,000 rubles, they fell in the second part of the month (SGA. F. R-25. Op. 1. D. 73. L. 72ob.).

City hospital.

The staff as of July 12, 1923, consisted of 22 employees. At the same time, 21 people were being treated in the hospital, 13 of whom were treated at the expense of the insurance fund and 8 from other categories. According to the type of disease, the patients were divided into 6 malaria, 14 non-infectious and 1 woman in labor. According to the presented book of inventory, the hospital had the following stock of linen (Table 4).

Table 4. Linen supply for the city hospital (SGA. F. R-25. Op. 1. D. 73. L. 72ob.)

Nº	Type of linen	Number of linen
1.	Blankets	193
2.	Sheets	171
3.	Men's shirts	53
4.	Towels	160
5.	Pillowcases	76
6.	Men's underpants	80

The stock of dressings was: 6 gross of bandages (1 gross is equal to 144 bandages). The stock of medicines was sufficient for 1-2 months. According to the presented food book, on July 12 there were: 6 pounds of sugar, 4.7 pounds of vegetable oil. As can be seen from this data, the city hospital did not have any stock and lived mainly on what was purchased for each day. There was only a small stock of potatoes in the hospital storeroom. Lunch on July 12 was: for patients of the insurance fund – green borscht and zucchini with meat and rice, 1.5 pounds of bread. For other patients – green borscht and porridge, 1 pound of bread. The general daily norm for insurance patients was up to 3,300 calories and other patients up to 2,300 calories. However, this food standard was insufficient and the amount spent on the table for general hospitals in the amount of 12 rubles was extremely low (SGA. F. R-25. Op. 1. D. 73. L. 73).

The hospital premises required repairs, whitewashing had not been done for the last 3 years. The sewerage and water supply did not work. The kitchen and laundry were in an extremely unsatisfactory condition and also required repairs. The bathroom in the city hospital did not work, stagnant water flowed into the Kuropatkinsky ditch, an open ditch running through the city, flowing into the Sochi River. In addition to the cash, food and food books for the economic part, monthly statements were kept on the movement of inpatients and outpatients. Separately for patients of the insurance fund, Red Army soldiers (military) and malaria patients (SGA. F. R-25. Op. 1. D. 73. L. 73).

City children's home (orphanage).

Data on the number of staff and pupils of the orphanage are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Data on staff and pupils of the children's home (SGA. F. R-25. Op. 1. D. 73. L. 73)

Nº	Staff and pupils	Number of people
1.	Staff	10
2.	Children	16 (in the age category from 1 year to 6 years)

The premises of the children's home were kept in good order and cleanliness. As the commission noted: "the children looked contented and well-fed". The dinner consisted only of plant food, there was no meat. The children's home had a small farm consisting of two goats, rabbits and chickens. The children's linen was kept in good condition: the washing was quite satisfactory. The general impression of the children's home, as the commission noted, "was positive". (SGA. F. R-25. Op. 1. D. 73. L. 73).

Surgical Department of the City Hospital (referred to as a separate unit).

The head of the surgical department was the well-known Sochi doctor A.L. Gordon. As of July 15, 1923, the surgical department staff consisted of 13 employees. There were 10 patients, two of whom were treated at the expense of the insurance fund and 8 patients were treated at their own expense. The surgical department was designed for 15 places, with the possibility of deploying up to 30 places if necessary. The price for each patient was 25 rubles, and a separate fee was charged for procedures according to the established prices (SGA. F. R-25. Op. 1. D. 73. L. 73).

The department kept a cash-income-expense book. According to the records for the month of June, there were 6619 rubles in income and 6672 rubles 50 kopecks in expenses. The employees received their salaries from the authorized health department of the city of Sochi. Data on linen provision are presented in [Table 6](#).

Table 6. Linen supply for the surgical department (SGA. F. R-25. Op. 1. D. 73. L. 73)

No	Type of linen	Numbers of linen
1.	Sheets	30
2.	Towels	29
3.	Men's shirts	41
4.	Blankets	69

It should be noted that, according to the commission's conclusion, there was insufficient linen for patients in the surgical department. The hospital surgery was supplied with medicines and dressings for 2-3 months. The unsatisfactory condition of the premises, which needed repair (walls, roof and partially floor coverings) was also noted (SGA. F. R-25. Op. 1. D. 73. L. 73).

5. Conclusion

Thus, based on the conducted research, it can be concluded that the health care sector of the city of Sochi in 1923 was in an unsatisfactory state, since almost all city social institutions had serious problems. In a positive way, it is worth noting only the orphanage, which, although in good condition, still could not fully service its pupils (which is clearly seen from the example of the vegetarian diet of children).

The following aspects can be highlighted here:

1. The condition of medical institutions in the city of Sochi (the city hospital and its surgical department) required significant repairs, updating of inventory equipment, and improving nutrition for patients.
2. The financial statements were in an unsatisfactory state and required bringing them into proper order.
3. Also, as the commission noted, the treatment of patients was commercialized, which was contrary to the new ideology of the country and required an urgent change to completely free medical care for the city's population.

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