

KIM JONG IL

**SOME PROBLEMS ARISING
IN IMPROVING PUBLIC
HEALTH**

WORKING PEOPLE OF THE WHOLE WORLD, UNITE!

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Talk to the Senior Officials in the Sector
of Public Health
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Public health is a vitally important sector that is geared to promoting the health of the people. In a steady endeavour to improve public health, our Party has introduced important policies in each period and taken steps to solve the problems arising in this sector on a priority basis.

Our country's socialist health service system established by the great leader is the best of its kind in the world. There is no other country in the world that holds itself responsible for taking care of the health of all the people, from the children and mothers of babies to the elderly, and that offers them medical services that are entirely free of charge. However, in recent years the public health sector has failed to keep abreast of the requirements of the developing situation, and this is due to the scant concern shown by officials. We should channel great efforts into the sector so as to effect a drastic improvement in the prevention and treatment of illness.

Hygiene and anti-epidemic work should be carried out in an all-out, nationwide movement.

Primary attention should be directed to the prevention of infectious diseases.

Combating viral hepatitis, serum hepatitis in particular, has emerged as a worldwide concern. Data show that most cases of viral hepatitis are of serum hepatitis, divided into hepatitis B and hepatitis C according to the virus type, which, without timely treatment, is likely to develop into chronic hepatitis, cirrhosis or cancer of the liver. Preventive measures to combat viral hepatitis should be introduced that are infallible. Particular attention needs to be directed to the measures against hepatitis B and hepatitis C, which are infections carried in the blood.

Thoroughgoing steps should be taken to prevent hepatitis

being transmitted through blood transfusions. If a healthy person is given a transfusion of blood from a carrier of the hepatitis B or hepatitis C virus, he or she is likely to be infected. Such an occurrence would be so grave as to be little short of criminal. The health sector should build up the blood-supply institutions and establish a well-ordered system of testing, collecting, storing and disinfecting blood.

Instances of hepatitis being transmitted by syringes should be eliminated. I hear there are quite a few such instances. In order to prevent their occurrence, it is essential to sterilize syringes and to use them on an individual basis. The Ministry of Public Health should take prompt, revolutionary steps to produce disposable syringes and supply them to all the health institutions across the country. This step alone will go a long way to preventing contagious diseases.

A strict system for sterilizing needles for acupuncture should be in place. From what I have heard, some doctors use needles on different people randomly, without ever sterilizing them properly. Cleaning a needle with a piece of sanitary cotton once or twice is not the way to disinfect it properly.

Drastic measures should be adopted for the disinfection of medical equipment, since serum hepatitis is passed on mostly in the course of treatment in hospitals.

Measures must be adopted to ensure the correct diagnosis of and screening for infectious diseases. In particular, it is imperative to adopt proper methods of diagnosis and to improve the standard of screening for the symptoms of hepatitis C and other forms of hepatitis.

Infectious gastrointestinal diseases, including paratyphoid fever, must be curbed by improving prevention and treatment. To this end, it is essential that steps be taken to disinfect the water supply and sewage systems and improve hygiene conditions, and

that strict discipline be established in the quarantine service. We should prevent cases of infection by redoubling the efforts we put into medical services.

The effective prevention and treatment of infectious diseases requires the mass production of a range of preventive medicines. Some of the vaccines currently being produced in our country are low in quality. We should improve the quality and increase the variety of preventive medicines.

It is necessary to build up the material and technical foundations of our hygiene-service and anti-epidemic centres, enhance their role and ensure the prompt supply of sterilizing materials to them.

It is important to devote close concern to promoting the health of women.

Since the inauguration of the modern Pyongyang Maternity Hospital, considerable achievements have been made in health care for women and babies. The hospital is now extremely popular with the public. A dozen years have passed since it was opened, and it must continue to be run efficiently. The Ministry of Public Health should improve its equipment under a yearly plan, and provide it with sufficient quantities of a wide variety of spare parts, hygiene equipment and materials, along with medicines. It will be impossible for the hospital to operate properly if we fail to build on its initial facilities. We should also improve maternity hospitals, obstetrics and gynaecology departments at hospitals and the delivery rooms in ri people's hospitals in the provinces in order to guarantee effective care during childbirth, and take care to ensure that women do not contract any erosive or other diseases.

A variety of the equipment and materials needed in the care of women's health should be produced and supplied in large quantities. The Party has adopted the relevant measures, but

leading officials have abandoned their implementation halfway on one pretext or another. This is glaring evidence of officials' poor regard for women. They should correct their approach, apply their minds to the issue of women's health and ensure the regular supply of the items needed.

Children's health is another area of vital concern. Bringing up children with strong bodies is a highly important matter that has a bearing on the future of the nation. We intend to start work soon on building a modern central children's hospital in Pyongyang. Once open, it will make a major contribution to caring for the health of our country's children. Measures are also needed to reinforce the prevention and treatment institutions for children and the nurseries and kindergartens in local areas, and to take proper care of children's hygiene and nutrition while they are growing up. In particular, a strict approach should be adopted by nurseries and kindergartens in their disinfection and anti-epidemic work for the prevention of contagious diseases.

A boost in the development of dental care is required.

Dental care is now a matter of great public concern. Strong teeth are vital for eating a hearty meal and working hard with a healthy body. Unhealthy teeth can cause digestion problems because food is not chewed properly, and result in discomfort.

We plan to attach a dental hospital to the central children's hospital to be built in Pyongyang, and this will make it possible to provide better dental care, both preventive and curative, for children. Proper dental hygiene should be observed from childhood; otherwise, oral diseases may be contracted in childhood that cause lifelong discomfort.

Propagation of information about oral hygiene should be intensified among children and adults so that people always keep their teeth clean. Keeping the teeth clean is the way to prevent tooth decay and various dental diseases, including pyorrhoea.

It is necessary to reinforce the material and technical standards of dental-care centres and drastically improve the technical levels and skills of dentists and prosthetic surgeons. Special emphasis must be laid on raising technical levels in the area of prosthetics and the skills of prosthetic surgeons. The supply of the necessary equipment and materials for dental care is important, for this sector, more than any other area of medical care, requires a wide variety of gadgets and materials. The Ministry of Public Health should adopt measures to supply good quality items in sufficient quantities, after drawing up detailed plans for what is to be produced domestically and what is to be imported.

Great efforts must be directed to the prevention and treatment of cancerous diseases.

Tackling such diseases is proving a tough challenge around the world. They take a huge death toll every year.

In order to prevent cancer, it is important to take care of one's dietary life and take regular physical exercise.

The high incidence of lung cancer among Europeans is, reportedly, caused mainly by heavy smoking. Also their diet, consisting largely of meat, produces a great many cases of constipation and cancer of the colon. Meat-rich meals are not good for the health. The many cases of cardiovascular disease among Europeans are also due to an excessive intake of animal fat.

Koreans have eaten mainly vegetables and fish since olden times. Our country is abundant in vegetables that contain a variety of nutritive substances, as well as in fish resources, since it is bordered by the sea on three sides. Fish is rich in protein and unsaturated fatty acids, which are good for the health. Our people's dietary traditions are basically sound. People should refrain from eating salty, hot or too much food.

Self-centredness should be eliminated in developing the network of hospitals.

Industrial establishments, the army, public security organs, the railways and other sectors are currently intent on setting up their own hospitals, on the pretext of something or other to do with their peculiar situation. This is a wrong approach. Setting up a succession of hospitals without any detailed plans for managing them will lead to no good, and only serve to make the medical care system irrational and complicated.

In order to develop public health, it is essential to produce medicines, medical equipment and sanitary materials for hospitals on an intensive basis. It would be a good idea for the Ministry of Public Health to produce large amounts of good quality medicines the effectiveness of which our country is familiar with, and export some of them, as this will yield sufficient foreign currency for importing the medicines and equipment we need. Drastic steps must be taken to improve the quality of domestically produced medical instruments.

We must also adopt measures to make good use in medical treatment of such natural resources as mineral water, hot springs and mud, which are rich in our country.

The Ministry of Public Health should channel great efforts into developing medical science and technology and improving the technical levels and skills of health workers, so as to raise the country's medicine up to the world standard as quickly as possible.

In order to improve public health, the Ministry of Public Health should enhance its role, and provincial, city and county administrative and economic committees should provide effective guidance over this sector. The ministry must work out well-considered plans for improving health services and encourage its officials to work with revolutionary drive and

enterprise. The Administration Council and local administrative and economic committees should adopt the attitude of masters in this sector and find prompt solutions to its problems, including the modernization of hospitals and the provision of the foreign currency needed for improving prevention and treatment.

By concentrating on the development of public health, we can give full scope to the superiority of our socialist health-care system.