



MEDICALISATION OF EVERYDAY LIFE

The vigorous development of medicine has contributed to increasing people's wellbeing, prolonged life expectancy and facilitated everyday living. There are now efficient treatments for a greater number of illnesses than before, or at least we have the means to alleviate suffering from them. Meanwhile, our everyday life is being medicalised, in particular with the commercialisation of health care. Today, even minor complaints are treated by means of medicine and responsibility for matters that before did not fall within the sphere of health care is shifting to it. The Advisory Board on Health Care Ethics sees it necessary to draw serious attention to the following:

Factors that promote people's wellbeing include sufficient rest, a reasonable amount of healthy food, physical activity, good human relations, and meaningful work and other activities. In most cases these circumstances, if they are attainable, and use of common sense are enough for creating wellbeing. Many everyday problems can be solved through interaction and giving and receiving assistance that normally are a part of human relationships. It is vital to bring matters such as communality, co-operation and consideration and helping of other people back to focus as the traditional values sustaining our community, since they are excellent tools in coping with everyday difficulties.

Also decisions made in fields other than health care, e.g. education, physical activity, culture and technology, have a great impact on people's wellbeing and health. Universal compulsory education has immensely influenced our welfare and wellbeing. Traffic arrangements crucially prevent or reduce accidental deaths and disabilities. It is possible to influence people's behaviour and safety by town planning and structures. Healthy lifestyles are learned at an early age, adults functioning as models for children. Schools, day care centres and child health clinics support parents by emphasising the importance of healthy life habits, regular, healthy and reasonable nutrition, sufficient sleep and drug- and alcohol-free life.

Medical diagnoses have 'infiltrated' from the sphere of medical care into people's everyday life. Needs and hopes are often mixed. Matters that are a part of everyday life are often defined as illnesses. It is however natural that people's moods change, and there is no need to label these as illnesses that should be treated with medicines.

Medicalisation means bringing activities of people or society into the domain of medicine and explaining them by medical terms. Many phenomena in life, such as natural variation of moods, ageing, menopause or death should not be medicalised, although it can be quite in order to treat people suffering from complaints related to these phenomena by means of medicine.

It is important to dismantle medicalisation that has increased alarmingly, not only because taking responsibility for looking after one's own wellbeing improves the quality of life for chronically ill persons, but also because society should have sufficient resources for solving problems and taking care of people that demand special skills and resources from society.