TRADITIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR BIBLIOThERAPY IN BULGARIA

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Abstract

In many countries, bibliotherapy are used to treat a variety of illnesses and to help individuals solve their problems. Bibliotherapy is used and applied to different age groups, starting with children, through fairy tales and stories, and reaching people of a ripe old age. In Bulgaria, the use of reading as a way of healing is still paving its way. It is used mostly in the specialized medical institutions in the application of psychotherapeutic activities.

The paper is an attempt to create a realistic picture of bibliotherapy development processes in Bulgaria by presenting related publications in Bulgaria. Bibliotherapy today attracts more and more the attention of the scientific circles in Bulgaria, who strive to maximize the healing possibilities of the books. It is advisable to trace the genesis of the bibliotherapeutic reading, its application nowadays, and the further prospects.

Keywords: Bulgaria, bibliotherapy, books, reading.

"Everywhere I go I find a poet has been there before me"

Sigmund Freud

1 INTRODUCTION

It is difficult to talk about scientific interpretation of bibliotherapy in Bulgaria due to the development of historical events in the country at the beginning of 20th century. On the one hand, in that period the use of psychotherapeutic practices in the treatment of patients was poorly enforced. On the other hand, at international level, bibliotherapy was at an early stage of its development and application, which also had a significant impact. It was quite natural that, at the outset, publications coming out in our country were mainly translations or such, partially reflecting foreign experience. The nature of bibliotherapy requires a well-developed library network and the availability of trained professionals - medics, psychologists, pedagogues or librarians. Nowadays, the use of healing with reading is still paving its way in Bulgaria. It is mostly used in specialized medical institutions in the application of psychotherapeutic activities.

To comply with the logic of tracking and differentiation of the bibliotherapy, in this article is structured by bibliotherapy types: institutional, clinical and developmental. This is done in order to highlight the involvement of the library community with the bibliotherapy problems.

2 METHODOLOGY

One of the first publications in Bulgaria, related to bibliotherapy, is in the field of Dr Simeon Hanchev's institutional bibliotherapy. In the Scientific Review section of "Literary Voice" newspaper N 411 of 30.11.1938 he published an article with the title "The Need for Libraries for Patients". An analysis was made of the accepted provisions during this period, which claimed that diseases were influenced solely by medicine methods. This adoption of techniques other than the strictly medical ones, offered an opportunity for a complete rethinking of the healing process. Complementing it allowed the patient to go through the healing period painlessly and smoothly.

The first publication by Dr S. Hanchev provided interesting and scientifically interpreted information, thoroughly explaining the basic mechanisms for the application of book therapy, presenting foreign practices. The analysis of these issues posed many questions to the public at that time. Unfortunately, however, it failed to provoke the desired reactions. The functions of the so-called hospital libraries remained underdeveloped in our healthcare establishments. The practices were episodic and the lack of established mechanisms and facilities remains one of the main reasons for the poor use of bibliotherapy in Bulgaria to this day.
For the first time in an institutional environment in Bulgaria in the 1960s one of the varieties of bibliotherapy – “poetry therapy” - was used by Prof. Nikola Shipkovensky and Dr Dora Mumdzhiева as a resocializing method for patients with endogenous psychoses. The method has two main stages - stimulation to oral analysis of a literary work and written literary analysis as well as analysis of people’s own thoughts, feelings, moods. Works of all literary genres can be used for the purposes of psychotherapy, where enormous amount of life wisdom is accumulated.

In the 1970s D. Mumdzhiева included the psychological and correction work using poetry in the system of cultural therapy in a psychiatric clinic for the treatment of a wide range of diseases in an individual and group form. The healing influence was based on the mechanisms of reaction, affective unloading, suggestion and persuasion, improvement of contacts and re-education of the patient.

Another author accepting the use of bibliotherapy in an institutional environment is Anna Kokoshkarova. According to her, bibliotherapy uses literary material for targeted psychological influence on the personality of the patient in the context of individual or group intervention.

At the end of the 20th century the use of libraries, combined with other therapeutic methods began in an institutional environment. In the 1970s Dr Dimitar Pantelleev’s team from the Second Psychiatric Clinic of the Research Institute for Neurology, Psychiatry and Neurosurgery (RINPN) at the Medical Academy in Sofia as well as Georgi Kisyov’s team at the Psychiatric Hospital in Radnevo contributed extremely to the introduction and the use of bibliotherapy in Bulgaria.

One of the forms of working with patients proposed by Dr D. Panteleev was a “therapeutic club”, which is a modern structure of socialization. Favourable conditions for psychotherapy and socialization were created. “A Programme for Therapy, Group Therapy and Socialization” was compiled to change patients' attitude towards themselves, their illness and their relatives, to change their assessment of the situation in which they live; hence new opportunities could be revealed for them.

The author suggests a very interesting option - a literary psychogram, which is considered an original Bulgarian version of the bibliotherapy. This methodology, applied in Bulgaria, was a good start, but unfortunately it had no practical application in most of the specialized establishments.

Katya Belopitova, a clinical psychologist, developed and experimented with her own method of performing a group therapy in the day care centre of the University Hospital “Aleksandrovskа”. This method uses painting tools, musical recordings, fairy tales, additional psychotherapeutic literature, etc. to help the psychotherapist.

A. Alexiev’s team applied “The Occupational Therapy Programme” at Alexandrovskа hospital and at “St. Naum” hospital in Sofia. “Integrative rehabilitation and resocialization of people with mental disabilities” is evidence of a successfully applied complementary pharmacotherapy, psychotherapy and sociotherapy in people with mental disabilities. According to experts, these modern syncretic standards, the integrative rehabilitation and re-socialization in the rehabilitation of patients with mental disorders are prioritized in healthcare. In this regard, occupational therapy, entertaining ergotherapy, the so called therapeutic societies and clubs for people, recovered after illness, are credible organizational models for tertiary psychoprophylaxis. The idea of combining work and entertaining therapy with walks, communication in subgroups, forms of recreation and ethno-cultural activities - healing and communication gymnastics, psycho-gymnastics, bioenergy, bibliotherapy and literary psychodrama, poetry therapy etc., lies at its core and has led to higher end results in the general treatment.

The practical accomplishment of such programmes is a good sign that things are changing and a variety of supporting techniques have achieved positive results. In Bulgarian hospitals the introduction of such a methodology requires well qualified specialists with extensive practical and theoretical experience as well as the accumulation of empirical material reflecting and corresponding to our reality.

One of the publications reflecting the potential of clinical bibliotherapy is the one by Ivan Bubalev. It came out in 1968 in “Librarian” journal and analyzed the origin and etymology of the term as well as the information about its application, dating back to ancient times. The emphasis is placed on how important it is for both the physician and the librarian to participate in the selection of books. The conclusion is that despite the great opportunities that libraries offer, bibliotherapy is poorly known and poorly used in our country.

Violeta Yolova is one of the authors, dealing with clinical bibliotherapy in her book “The Healing Power of the Book” (1975). She makes an in-depth review of the historical data on the use of books as
elements of the healing process. It is important to regulate the boundaries and to outline the potential opportunities and perspectives of healing with books. Another significant fact is that at the time of this publication, alternative and new forms of working with readers, tailored to their specific needs, were already sought after in Bulgaria, too.

Another publication on the subject of art therapy that concerns bibliotherapy as well, is “Visual Arts Techniques in Art Therapy”, an article by Daniela Zaberska, which considers art therapy as a form of psychotherapy through art and as a process of harmonizing the personality through development and self-expression. It defines bibliotherapy as a section of art therapy and is perceived as a psychotherapeutic function that helps children to cope with their psychological problems. A magnitude of suppressed emotions is revealed and transformed into something positive through art.

In Bulgaria one of the main papers in the field of developing bibliotherapy is “Psychotherapeutic Interactions in Education” by Lydia Tsvetanova-Churoukova and Violina Stoyneva. The attention of the authors is directed to the mass educational practice, where the use of psychotherapeutic methods in an adapted form can be directed to children who face difficulties in their activity. The way they interpret bibliotherapy gives us reason to assume that it is one of the good practices that support learning. By examining it in the spectrum of “art therapy”, they reveal the diverse opportunities for its application.

Among the works concerning bibliotherapy in Bulgaria and the opportunities for its practical application as an educational practice is “Grammar of Fantasy Discourse” by Assoc. Prof. Mariana Balabanova. Her book examines the development of children's speech, creative narrative, etc. The psychological and psycholinguistic foundations of children’s verbal creativity are traced, as well as the trinity thinking-imagination-emotions and the projections in the child’s speech. One of the stages that relates to bibliotherapeutic methodologies is called “Stories based on Literary Works – Personal Interpretation of the Artistic Idea”. The authoress offers an approved and working model of work, based on personal experience and on forms that she applied in practice.

3 RESULTS

Based on this review of the theoretical development of bibliotherapy in Bulgaria, the following conclusions can be made:

- The first publications on bibliotherapy in Bulgaria date back to the beginning of the twentieth century. They reflect foreign experience, since no such practice was applied in our country at that time.

- Bibliotherapy is a complex process involving psychiatrists, social workers, psychologists, pedagogues, librarians, artists, various public organizations. We have yet to work in sync with all elements of the system. In Bulgaria at this stage it is used only in an institutional environment.

- N. Shipkovenski, D. Mumdzhiева and Dimitar Pantelev are pioneers of bibliotherapy in Bulgaria. They have been working in this field since the mid-1960s. However, the problem in Bulgaria is that this practice is not popular enough. There is no succession between the different generations of researchers as well as between the institutions involved in this activity.

- In recent years, there has been a tendency to increase publications on the researched issues.

- The majority of publications in Bulgaria are by foreign authors.

- The analysis of foreign literature on the issues of bibliotherapy, translated in our country, can be the basis for good practices.

4 CONCLUSIONS

Today, bibliotherapy is increasingly active in the daily work of public libraries in a number of countries around the world. It has become a multifaceted concept that is of great importance to the nature of the library profession in the 21st Century. The bibliotherapeutic activity is aimed at intensive work with people through the use of fiction to make a positive impact on their lives in the direction of discovering the pleasure of reading as well as helping to treat mental illnesses. It is a general term for many ideas on the use of books as an aid in the therapy of people with various diseases as well as for people's recreation, but research on its practical application is still limited.
In Bulgaria bibliotherapy training in academic environment began recently [3]. Through educating MA students at ULSIT it was given a good start, which I hope will result in a change in our library education and its development to higher professional levels. The lectures aim to examine possibilities which reveals Bibliotherapy by presenting its various forms, methods and functions. The students learn about a new and alternative forms of employment applicable in the library environment. The course provides theoretical and practical knowledge to the students about the nature and application of Bibliotherapy in libraries. Students learn the historical and scientific development of Bibliotherapy. The Bibliotherapy brings together at least three fields of knowledge - a Science Studying the Book (Book Science, Literature, Library), the Science of the Human Soul, Targeted Bibliotherapy (Medicine, Psychiatry, Psychotherapy, Rehabilitation) and the Science of reading, (Ensuring Efficiency of Bibliotherapy, Psychology of Reading, Reading Instruction), which makes it extremely useful in the training of students [2]. The first academic textbook on bibliotherapy in Bulgaria is a fact, too¹.

Extremely important is the preparation and motivation of the students to actively and competently deal with the theory and practice of bibliotherapy, which is one of the enriching and expanding spheres in the activity of modern librarian-information organizations and institutions. Therefore, the interest in this topical issue is both theoretically explicable and practically justifiable. This is even more true when it comes to the training of students from specialties related to library and information sciences who need further knowledge of the existing theses and practices on librarianship. They need to know the real possibilities, the mechanisms and the main means of its implementation. Moreover, international and Bulgarian practice in the field of bibliotherapy shows its positive results and proves that it enables the successful treatment. Bibliotherapy as a discipline revealing new opportunities for Bulgarian library and information education. As a result of its introduction, more and more students have chosen their diploma work oriented in the field of bibliotherapy.

“In Bulgaria, bibliotherapy has recently been studied in an academic environment, but through the training of MA students in library, information and cultural management, a good start is put forward in ULSIT, which can be multiplied and be the reason for more active implementation of this new and up-to-date thematic circle of knowledge in academic and continuing librarian education.” [3].

Other initiatives in this direction are the first trainings of Bulgarian librarians for bibliotherapy consultants, carried out with the support of “Global Libraries” Foundation and the Centre for Continuing Education of Librarians at the Bulgarian Library and Information Association.

The training sessions are oriented towards being acquainted with the techniques of bibliotherapy. The aim is to develop skills through which librarians can provide readership support based on work with various literary works. Librarians' techniques can influence the reader's culture, certain elements of the personality of the reader, as well as provide emotional support for people in crisis. Thanks to these trainings in Bulgaria there is an increase in the number of library specialists who use real-world bibliotherapy techniques.

Work in public libraries has always been a mirror image of the desire to reflect the social responsibilities inherent in their functions. Librarians have the potential to do a lot in this direction by providing a “cure for the soul” in a variety of accessible ways for the whole of society. Libraries are more likely to attract and retain readers by offering a wide range of self-help literature and librarians discovering their new role as bibliotherapists.

It is necessary to understand that bibliotherapy is a complex process involving psychiatrists, social workers, psychologists, educationalists, librarians, artists and various public organizations. All elements of the system have yet to work in sync.

The review made so far allows us to look at the bibliotherapy through the prism of many schools, sciences and cultures. “Reading enriches intellectually and emotionally, develops analytical thinking as well as empathic behavior. Reading is communication, but not directly but mediated by the text.” [1]. Book treatment is as institutionally committed as it is free of restrictions. Its application requires above all a good knowledge of the literature and of the human psyche at the same time. The boundary is very thin and already blurred, the sciences are combining in order to achieve maximum results and the center again falls to the person with their worries, opportunities and questions.

¹ S.Eftimova is author of the thesis “BIBLIOTHERAPY (History, theory, practice, modernity)” (2012) under the scientific supervision of Prof. Maria Miadenova, Philol D; the textbook “Bibliotherapy (Theory and practice)” (2015) and the academic course “Bibliotherapy” in MA curricula at ULSIT.
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REFERENCES

