
DOCTORS OF HOPE

A LETTER TO EDITORIAL BOARD

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Article submitted: 30.07.2022; accepted: 10.08.2022

The Doctors of Hope Association is an organization of public utility, active since 1989, initially as a branch of French charity organizations Médecins du Monde, located in Cracow. Within this structure, the Polish Doctors of the World had their branches in Warsaw, Gdańsk, Wrocław, Cracow and Nowy Sącz. In Cracow they operated already then the free Pharmacy of Donated Medicines, existing since the times of the 1981 communist martial law in Poland. They also organized numerous humanitarian aid convoys, among others to Romania (1989), Lithuania (1991), Kurdistan (1991), Kazakhstan (1992-1997), the countries of former Yugoslavia (1992-1994), Chechnya (1994-1996), Rwanda (1994), the hospital in Ngaoundaye in the Central African Republic (2019) and recently the hospital in Tarnopol, Ukraine (2022).

Keywords: Doctors of Hope, homeless, Covid-19

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The necessity of concentration on still more extensive programs of assistance to the poorest and most needy members of society in Poland and also to our compatriots in the former south-eastern Borderlands was, among others, the reason of transforming in 1995 the Doctors of the World Association into the Polish non-profit extra-governmental organization Doctors of Hope Association. On 11th September 2004 the said Association on the Extraordinary General Assembly of Members passed the formal Statute, in force to this day. The reasons of transformation were more complex and ensued from ideological differences.

The world economic, political and philosophical outlook changes, observed in the recent years also in Poland, have exerted profound influence on dwindling the community spirit and social responsibility for the fate of „those others” in need due to poverty or alienation, as in the case of our compatriots in the East.

In the course of its 33-year long operation, the Doctors of Hope Association, in cooperation with the Polish medical organizations in the Borderlands, has been undertaking actions serving not only the maintaining of national ties, but also aimed at rendering the concrete emergency medical aid to those in need, living in ultra-difficult conditions and facing numerous hardships, particularly the Polish population in foreign lands. This is particularly true regarding the part of society with hampered access to medical services, particularly the elderly, unemployed and disabled persons.

Creating the foundations of our Association 33 years ago, we were basing on the principles contained in the so-called Charter of Humanitarian Actions, passed by the European Congress of Humanitarian Medicine and Human Rights, co-organized by us (then Médecins du Monde) in Cracow. In the said Charter, signed by 400 delegates from the West and East in 1990, we included our motto: convinced that humanitarian actions

should aim at the benefit of both our compatriots and foreigners, both in our country and abroad, we object to any discrimination originating from poverty, pathology and uncertain social status, we pledge to render assistance to all victims of natural, ecological and political catastrophes both in this country and abroad; we voice conviction that the principle of non-interference ends where the threat of non-assistance begins.

Many stipulations of this Charter, known in the West as the Cracow Charter, were included into the Association’s Statute, as a medical humanitarian and charity organization.

The scope of the Association’s humanitarian activities are the areas of our so-called missions, i.e. the expeditions of medical teams with medical equipment and materials to the countries where civilians were victims of wars or domestic rebellions. In such cases it happened sometimes that we went without the invitation from local authorities or even against their will, bearing the burden of consequences ensuing from the lack of international regulations concerning humanitarian and medical aid.

Further examples of emergency medical assistance for civilians, always disregarding their ethnic or political background, were our medical missions to Chechnya, Sarajevo, Albania, Belgrade or Kosovo. I think that these activities also encompass our dispatching of medical transports to Georgia after the 2008 Moscow invasion within the framework of cooperation proposed by the late senator Maciej Płażyński, chairman of the Polish Community.

Our humanitarian, medical and charity activities for the Polish borderland population wouldn’t be effective but for the cooperation with Polish medical associations in Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Romania, Moldova and lately Georgia. We experienced great assistance from the local Polish ecclesiastical organizations, notifying their congregations about the arrival of the doctors from Poland.

In the course of the above mentioned operations, we were always assisted by the Polish organizations, such as the Polish Community,

Association of the Polish Knights of the Order of Malta, Polish Medical Mission, and later for many years, the Polish Mission of Médecins du Monde, based in Bordeaux, with the late lamented Delegate dr René Chassaigne, a Honorary Member of our Doctors of Hope Association.

Regrettably, it has to be stated that the growing expansion of regulations, orders and administrative prohibitions, employed by bureaucratic directives of the European Union resulted in considerable limitation of those our activities which were aimed at charity assistance to population both in Poland and in the Borderlands. This anti-social procedure follows in Poland as well. Consequently, soon the so-called Pharmacies of Donated Medicines will shortly disappear in this country, which is incredible in the light of the fact that for over half a century they have been functioning superbly and beneficially to many in such rich countries as England, France and Germany. We deem it as our duty to further participate in actions and programmes aimed at continuing advancement of medical communities in the Borderlands, which profoundly influence the biological status of local populations, particularly the younger generation.

I would also like to emphasize that we are greatly satisfied with the successes of our Colleagues from the Borderlands which we witnessed to during the VII World Congress of the Medical Polonia in Toruń or the III Congress of Polish Doctors and X Congress of the Medical Polonia in Gdańsk. Any suchlike achievements will bear fruits to the still better view of the role of Polish doctors in their native locations.

The coronavirus pandemic has changed the world and considerably restricted the contacts with the Polish diaspora. We have recently received doctor of Medical Sciences Borys Duda-Chairman of the Polonia Medical Organizations in the Republic of Moldova and doctor Krystyna Rotkie-

wicz from Vilnius, the latter particularly committed to cherish the memory of Professor Kazimierz Pelczar, an eminent Polish oncologist, murdered in Ponary near Vilnius in 1943. It is worth mentioning that in 2019 she was honoured by the President of Poland with the Gold Cross of Merit.

Fortunately, coronavirus failed to disorganize the operations of the Doctors of Hope Association in Poland; they were performed incessantly in spite of the initial lack of basic protective equipment and disinfectants.

Are we aware of the following facts concerning hundreds or even thousands members of our population, facing difficulties:

- **in obtaining the benefits of the public healthcare system ?**
- **in purchasing medicines in commercial pharmacies ?**
- **in getting aid for lonely people, those in Old People's Homes or lodging houses?**

For 33 years, the Doctors of Hope Association has been striving to help these people living in poverty, unemployed, homeless, disabled, pensioners and Polish families living in the former eastern Borderlands. To meet its ends, the Association runs the following:

– Ambulatory for the Homeless and Poor in Cracow, 4 Smoleńsk Street, located in the Centre of Father Pio's Work, the Capuchin Fathers. This healthcare institution admitted in 2021 more than 5 thousand patients, with many in dramatic state of health among them, on average 2-3 persons weekly. Following a basic medical treatment, they were directed to Hospital Emergency Wards and usually hospitalized. Many specialists work benevolently here from different fields of medicine: internal diseases, cardiology, geriatrics, neurosurgery, general surgery, vascular surgery, thorax surgery, orthopaedics, laryngology, ophthalmology, psychiatry, gynaecology, dentistry and psychology. The team of experienced nurses performs electrocardiography, intravenous and intramuscular injections, hygienic treat-

ment, dressings, they also conduct health education. The patients receive free emergency pharmacological treatment, hygienic underclothes and personal hygiene articles.

– Charity Station of Medicines and Medical Materials Distribution (formerly Pharmacy of Donated Medicines), Os. Dywizjonu 303, Pavilion 1, Cracow,

The Station distributes free medicines to people unable to receive them otherwise, prepares the batches of medical materials for the Ambulatories for the Homeless, Old People's Homes and also for the charity and humanitarian missions both in this country and abroad. The Station seeks the donors of non-expired medical materials which can be brought to the Centre of the Doctors of Hope in Cracow, Al. Pokoju 7, Ambulatory at 4 Smoleńsk Street or to the above-mentioned Charity Station.

In this way the achievements can be supported of hundreds of doctors, nurses, pharmacists and medical personnel all over the world, who reached those particularly in need of health and life protection, but also requiring respect for human rights, conscience and objection to the evil. THE DOCTORS OF HOPE appeared in Romania, Lithuania, Ukraine, Latvia, Moldova,

Chechnya, Albania, Georgia, Rwanda, Zambia and many other regions of the world, offering what is the most valuable - human health and life protection and so needed HOPE.

Unfortunately, the lack of funding hampers considerably the scope of help offered by us. Our activities are namely based upon the financial and material support from the wide public.

For this reason, we appeal wholeheartedly to all to who are not indifferent to the fate of „those others” to participate in the actions of the Doctors of Hope Association by:

- **transferring 1% from the personal income tax to our account, using KRS Nr 0000047746**
- **voluntary money transfers to our account: PKO BP S.A. I/O Kraków 58 1020 2892 0000 5902 0171 3833**
- **undertaking voluntary work in our organization**

Let us all the same not deprive those in need of assistance, of hope they will not be left to themselves in the situation they face. The terms of praise to our actions include numerous prizes and diplomas of appreciation, granted by the bodies of public administration and also non-public entities, testifying to the validity of mission to the benefit of our neighbour in need.



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