

The dilemma and strategy analysis of medical social work practice—A case study of medical social work in city B

Zheng Liu

College of Social and Ethnic Studies, University of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing, 102488, China

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Abstract: Based on the current situation of medical social work internships in City B, this study analyzes the current situation and dilemmas of medical social work internships in large-scale public hospitals in City B, and analyzes the practical paths for solving the dilemmas from an ecosystem theory perspective. The study finds that the mismatch between the traditional social work service model and the current needs of the medical environment is a major cause of the dilemma; in addition, the lack of professional embeddedness and the irrational job setting are also the causes of the difficulties of medical social work interns in carrying out professional services. This paper argues that the stagnant development of medical social work professional internships is not conducive to the development of medical social work, and should be improved simultaneously at the micro, meso, and macro levels in order for medical social work to develop in a more vigorous direction.

1. Introduction

In recent years, China's medical environment system has also begun to actively implement the concept of "whole person view", advocating the medical model of "whole person - whole process - holographic", emphasizing the methodology of not only looking at the "disease" but also looking at the "patient", treating the human being as a whole and examining the human being from a larger perspective, including the natural, social and psychological perspectives. It emphasizes the methodology of not only looking at the "sick", but also the "patient", treating the human being as a whole, and placing the human being in a larger whole, including the natural, social and psychological perspectives to be examined. People pay more and more attention to the deep-rooted health needs other than physical ailments, and for the healthcare system, in addition to helping patients to cure their physical ailments, it also undertakes the obligation to provide patients and their families with the necessary psychological care and social support services^[1]. Thus, medical social workers, as third-party subjects other than hospitals and patients, have much more professional space to play in "whole-person" treatment.

2. Current Situation of Medical Social Work Internship

Chinese academic research on medical social work internships mainly focuses on the medical

social worker interns themselves, and most of the research analyzes them from the perspectives of role positioning, role conflict, and embedded dilemmas, etc^[2]. Relevant research points out that the lack of practical ability is a common problem in the work of medical social work interns. In addition, Chinese scholars have found that social work interns in the hospital field often face the following dilemmas: slow adaptation to their roles, insufficient professional practice ability, ethical relationship dilemmas, and internship burnout. Although there are teaching programs for medical social work, most of them only focus on theoretical teaching and lack experience in how to provide professional services in real-world settings, or they directly follow the teaching models and programs of other fields of social work, which further blurs the roles and responsibilities of medical social workers^[3].

At the same time, the relevant departments in China have not set up a professional evaluation system for the organizations, and colleges and universities have no criteria for choosing internship organizations, and are unable to accurately evaluate their professionals' ability to teach and supervise internships, which makes it difficult for internship organizations to meet the needs of professional colleges and internship students in their entirety. Most studies have shown that the lack of functioning of social work internship supervision constrains the quality and development of social work internships. Chinese colleges and universities seldom carry out cooperation and exchanges with advanced foreign institutions in the field of social work, seldom send school supervisors to visit and study abroad to learn advanced teaching concepts of medical social work practice and supervisory experience, and seldom organize academic conferences related to internship supervision, which leads to a general lack of practice guidance experience and ability of internship supervisors in Chinese colleges and universities and a need to improve their qualities in all aspects.

3. Analysis of the Dilemma of Medical Social Work Internship

3.1 Insufficient professional integration and imbalance of job setting

Medical social work interns in medical institutions undertake many tasks that do not correspond to their professions, and a large amount of administrative work occupies the professional service time of medical social work interns, making it difficult for interns to carry out professional services in hospitals, which in turn leads to the difficulty of embedding medical social work in hospitals into their work systems, resulting in the problem of inadequate integration of social work and the medical field. In addition, since most public hospitals have not previously come into contact with social work and have not taken into account the professional needs and characteristics of social work, it is easy for hospitals to disperse medical social workers among other positions when setting up internships, resulting in the inability to give full play to the expertise and strengths of medical social workers.

3.2 Heterogeneity of professional service models and hospital needs

This problem is mainly caused by the differences between the service model of medical social workers and the needs of patients and the requirements of hospital organizations. The "bed turnover rate^[4]" requirement of large public hospitals is not in line with the service model of medical social work, and the lack of flexibility and specificity of medical social work interns prevents them from adjusting their services according to the specific conditions of the patients, thus leading to deviations in the development of medical social work services.

3.3 Limited medical background and excessive psychological pressure

Medical social work interns are exposed to more knowledge of psychology, sociology, political science and other disciplines in their courses, and they do not have enough knowledge of medical background. Medical social work interns often need to face the pain and difficulties of patients, and may be involved in hospice care, grief counseling and other areas of service. Long-term exposure to these pressures and challenges will lead to greater psychological pressure on medical social work interns, and if these sadness are not channeled in a timely manner or effective psychological support is not available, it may affect the work performance and quality of life of medical social work interns.

3.4 Lack of effective professional guidance and supervision mechanism

Most of the internship supervisors in the field of medical social work are concurrently appointed by hospital personnel, and the medical and nursing groups have not carried out professional social work services, and they lack experience in how to guide and supervise medical social work interns. Medical social work interns often fail to get timely feedback and support after encountering problems, and they may even face more confusions and challenges due to inappropriate supervision, so it is difficult for medical social work interns to improve their own performance and life in such a supervisory environment. Such a supervisory environment to improve their professional abilities and give full play to their professional strengths.

3.5 Conflict of role orientation and difficulty of integration

After entering the hospital, medical social work interns will go through the change of the role from students to medical social workers^[5]. However, due to the unfamiliarity with the medical field, the lack of medical knowledge, and the lack of clarity of the authority responsibility and role expectation of the medical social workers, it leads to their inability to adapt to the role of the medical social workers in a timely manner after being stationed in the hospital. Professional internships in colleges and universities are arranged in a "synchronized internship", where medical social worker interns are required to combine the roles of both student and medical social worker at the same time.

4. Action strategies to optimize medical social work internships

4.1 Micro level

4.1.1 Enhancement of professionalism and comprehensive ability

Medical social work interns should grasp the study time in school, actively study theories related to their specialty as well as medical and psychological knowledge, etc., and highlight their "professionalism" in medical social work while giving full play to the "comprehensive" characteristics of social work. Secondly, we will actively participate in the medical social work program. Secondly, they actively participate in forums, lectures and practical activities related to medical social work to increase their theoretical knowledge accumulation.

4.1.2 Emphasize on "tactics" strategy and teamwork

The medical environment is very special and complex, and the service recipients have different life backgrounds. Social work interns should learn to utilize conversation skills, try to obtain useful information in their conversations with service recipients, and create their own conversation patterns. They should also learn to cooperate in "interdisciplinary and inter-team" work, and to join

hands with all parties to formulate work plans, discuss lessons learned and gains made in the course of their work, and promote each other's professional development.

4.2 Meso level

4.2.1 Provide medical social worker courses and optimize the management of internship training

Colleges and universities should take up the corresponding training tasks and open social work courses in the direction of medical social work. They can cooperate with designated hospitals, where medical and nursing staff teach students medical knowledge and students can go to the hospitals for internships, which not only improves the curriculum system of medical social work, and enables students to learn theoretical knowledge while applying theories to practice, but on the other hand, also provides hospitals with a wealth of medical social work human resources. On the other hand, it can provide hospitals with abundant human resources of medical social workers. Hospitals should choose the internship wards for medical social work interns appropriately, and select places that can maximize the professional contribution of medical social work, such as hospice wards. Hospitals can provide pre-service guidance and training for interns according to different work requirements, so that interns can understand the work tasks of hospitals and have certain medical knowledge base in advance, thus enabling interns to adapt to the new environment as soon as possible and have a clear understanding of their roles, responsibilities and positioning.

4.2.2 Improve the supervision system and popularize the concept of social work

Colleges and universities should establish a set of perfect supervision system for internships, and give teachers sufficient supervision resources. Secondly, they should adopt the mechanism of joint supervision within and outside the school, and set up "external internship supervisors" in the hospitals, so as to help medical social worker interns analyze the needs of the patients and seek for a suitable point of social work intervention, so as to make the medical social worker services carry out more smoothly. Hospitals should increase the publicity of medical social workers, popularize the concept of medical social workers, so that medical and nursing staff have a new understanding of medical social workers, change their original attitudes and concepts of medical social workers, and provide interns with a good internship platform to create a good internal working environment.

4.3 Macro level

4.3.1 Establishing a sound system of regulations and policies for medical social workers

The state should introduce welfare policies for medical social work to attract more social work students to stay in the field of social work after graduation, and the welfare policies can also protect the full-time front-line medical social workers, so that they can devote themselves to the development of medical social work with greater enthusiasm, thus strengthening the cause of medical social work in China. On the other hand, strict laws and regulations can help medical social work set up industry guidelines, clear work rights and responsibilities and boundaries, and promote the standardized development of medical social work industry.

4.3.2 Enhance publicity and raise professional awareness

The government can make use of the advantages of the Internet and media to let more young people understand medical social work and encourage them to enroll in the social work profession, so as to establish a reliable reserve for medical social work^[6]. At the same time, traditional media can also be utilized to record the work routines of medical social workers, so as to let the public understand the nature of medical social work in close proximity, thus inspiring them to choose to

seek the help of social workers in times of difficulty, and establishing an initial relationship of trust with the public.

4.3.3 Increase financial investment and incubate full-time positions

The state should guarantee reasonable treatment for full-time medical social workers, provide special funding for front-line medical social workers, and may provide continuing education or training for medical social workers within a reasonable range to enhance job benefits. The State can invest funds in colleges and universities that offer social work majors to support the development of the medical social work discipline and to encourage college and university teachers and students to engage in scientific research and innovation. In addition, the State can increase financial investment in the construction of internship bases for medical social work and encourage medical institutions to create full-time positions for medical social workers, thereby broadening the career paths of medical social work students.

5. Conclusion

Based on the current situation of medical social work internship in city B and the internship experience of medical social work interns, this study has sorted out the five major dilemmas of medical social work internship at present, including insufficient professional integration and imbalance of job setting, heterogeneity of professional service mode and hospital demand, limited medical background and excessive psychological pressure, lack of effective professional guidance and supervision mechanism, and conflict of role orientation and integration difficulties, and put forward countermeasures on medical social work internship at the micro, meso, and macro levels, such as interns should build networked partnerships, colleges and universities should offer courses on medical social work, and the state should increase financial investment and incubate full-time positions, etc.

The qualitative data used in this paper are mainly based on the research on public hospitals in City B, so there are some limitations in the extrapolation of the research conclusions. First, the medical social work internship dilemma sorted out in this paper is only for the developmental status of medical social work internships in City B. A more in-depth analysis of medical social work service models in other regions is still needed. Secondly, due to the limitations of my thinking and the lack of research materials, the dilemmas of medical social work internship development and the solution paths proposed in this paper still need to be supplemented. Finally, I believe that the medical social work internship, through the precipitation and development in the next few years, will play a professional contribution to China's social work career with a more vigorous appearance.

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