

# ***Exploration of Stigmatization of Medical Personnel under the Situation of Anti-corruption in Medicine***

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**Abstract:** Medical anti-corruption is a profound and arduous reform task that requires the participation and support of the entire society. However, while strengthening supervision and accountability, and punishing corruption severely, the entire group of "medical personnel" should not be stigmatized due to a small number of cases being "blindfolded". This article explores the phenomenon of image stigmatization faced by medical personnel under the situation of anti-corruption in medicine, analyzes the reasons for its occurrence, and provides suggestions for improving their professional image. In the short term, the anti-corruption of medicine has indeed brought certain negative impacts on the image and reputation of medical personnel. The reshaping and improvement of professional image, which is currently in a "low valley," still requires joint efforts from multiple aspects.

Since July 2023, the NHC and nine government departments have jointly issued a document to start a centralized crackdown on corruption in the pharmaceutical sector nationwide. In the process of rectification, various provinces have issued documents to make a more detailed deployment of the medical anti-corruption work. According to the information disclosed by the Supreme People's Procuratorate, in the field of industrial and systemic corruption, the Supreme People's Procuratorate prosecuted 580 people in the medical field in 2023, and the medical system became the industry with the largest number of prosecutions in key anti-corruption industries in 2023. According to China-Singapore Health Statistics, at least 150 "key minority" in the medical and health system have been investigated from January to June 2024. Among them, there are some medical personnel engaged in medical-related work.

In the public opinion known as the "strongest" in the history of the medical anti-corruption situation, the media reported, the public keen attention, since July 2023, pharmaceutical anti-corruption related news take turn on the list, the medical corruption scandal after the network "label" type of stigma, not only affected the image of the whole medical system and reputation, also greatly damaged the medical staff professional image, exacerbated the doctor-patient relationship. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the image of stigma and the causes of medical staff under the situation of medical anti-corruption, in order to provide some reference for reshaping and improving

the professional image of doctors and resolving the crisis of doctor-patient relationship.

## **1. The image stigma faced by medical personnel under the situation of medical anti-corruption**

### **1.1 Medical staff are "rich"**

At present, with the medical anti-corruption cases disclosed reports, individual medical staff abuse of power, illegal seek financial amount of millions, tens of millions, such as known as "double hundred dean" of the dean of the first people's hospital wang, because of engineering construction, medical procurement, personnel, bribery hundreds of millions of yuan, with 100 properties, 100 parking Spaces; and the former party secretary, dean stone, using the wealth bought 8 cars, 7 property, and 6 million cash, these have become a network public opinion hotspot. Therefore, some netizens regard these individual cases as the common attribute of medical staff, and think that medical staff are all high-income groups, especially the "doctors" groups, which are often considered "rich" because of gray income.

### **1.2 Medical staff "take kickbacks"**

Under the current wave of anti-corruption in the pharmaceutical industry, some medical personnel have taken advantage of their positions to receive kickbacks or other improper benefits from production and operation enterprises and their distributors in various names during the procurement and clinical activities of drugs, medical devices, medical hygiene consumables, etc., which have been exposed in a concentrated manner. For example, Yang Moujun, former director of Pu'er People's Hospital in Yunnan, became a millionaire after accepting bribes of 16 million yuan for purchasing a linear accelerator; During his tenure as the director of the functional examination department at a hospital in Xuzhou, Zhang illegally accepted medical film kickbacks totaling 83000 yuan from a certain equipment company in Xuzhou by taking advantage of his position and violating national regulations; Zhang, Bian, and Feng are respectively the chief physician, deputy chief physician, and attending physician of the Department of Cardiovascular Medicine at a university affiliated hospital. They provide assistance to a pharmaceutical company by taking advantage of their positions such as prescribing and selecting pharmaceutical products, and each receive a kickback of 450000 yuan from the company. Some netizens put the problem of "taking kickbacks" into a stereotype of medical staff.

### **1.3 Medical staff "receive red envelopes"**

One of the contents of the medical anti-corruption crackdown is that medical staff violate the "nine guidelines for clean work". In reality, some medical staff accept red envelopes, asking for red envelopes has been repeatedly exposed <sup>[1]</sup>. Such as Suzhou city hospital obstetrician Lu 'an a peak received and take the initiative to ask for patients red envelope, xi' an first hospital two doctors from medical representative red envelope of events, Shanxi Province cancer hospital digestive endoscopy, minimally invasive surgery center doctor li mou charge for patients red envelope events cause social attention and public debate, many people will also individual medical staff "receive red envelopes" as the professional characteristics of medical staff.

### **1.4 "Unspoken rules" of medical personnel**

With the deepening of the medical anti-corruption storm, not for most people known as "medical

representative" frequently boarded the headlines, about medical representatives and medical staff between relationship also gradually revealed, the "hidden rules" including "rebates", in order to be able to make the drug marketing work smoothly, "erotic trade" phenomenon is not uncommon. For example, Luo, former secretary of the Party Branch and president of Tanzhou People's Hospital in Zhongshan City, Guangdong Province, and Yang Moujun, former deputy secretary of the Party Committee and president of Pu' er People's Hospital in Yunnan Province, violated life discipline and maintained improper relationship with others during the marriage relationship, causing bad influence. These incidents further normalize the medical staff's image of greed and lust.

### **1.5 "Excessive medical treatment" of medical personnel**

Under the situation of medical anti-corruption, some medical staff have been exposed to increase their personal income or hospital income through over-examination, excessive treatment and excessive prescribing. For example, the oncology physician of the Third Hospital of Beijing Medical University reported the tumor treatment incident, doctor Liu Moufeng of the Second Xiangya Hospital conducted excessive medical treatment for many times, and a woman in Xi'an spent 17,000 yuan in a local third-class hospital. Some medical personnel violate clinical medical norms and ethical norms, and conduct examination and treatment away from patients' actual conditions, etc. The increase and exposure of these events have increased the public's distrust of medical personnel.

## **2. Analysis of the causes of the image stigma of medical personnel**

### **2.1 Some news media cause image stigma to attract the attention of the audience**

The so-called stigmatization is the stereotype of group-biased negative characteristics and thus concealing other characteristics. In this process, the most common strategy of the strong party is "labeling". Due to the particularity of the profession, the news media firmly holds the "voice" of the social audience, that is, the topic that the media is keen on will also become the focus of the audience's attention<sup>[2]</sup>. In the situation of medical anti-corruption, the negative news reports related to the medical system are more "in line with the main theme". For example, some reports that medical personnel are suspected of corruption and bribery, and the first kind of stigmatization labels are "kickbacks", "commissions" and "bribes", such as the reports that the orthopedic director led the department doctors to take kickbacks of more than 5 million yuan, medical anti-corruption and drug consumables suppliers competed, the president took bribes, the doctor issued commissions, and a large area of corruption in a hospital in Hunan Province, and "Behind the vice president's bribery of 16 million yuan: more than half of the doctors had taken kickbacks, and the per capita kickbacks income was more than 100000 yuan". The medical personnel described in these reports seemed not concerned about medical technology, but only "roast that their income was too low". It has become a "common consensus" to consider how to "take kickbacks" and "think that your income should be three to five times higher than the average social income".

Another common label is that medical personnel "live in luxury homes", "keep mistresses", "keep mistresses", and "keep mistresses". This type of news often becomes a topic of conversation for people after meals due to its highly dramatic content, and naturally becomes a hot topic in the eyes of social news reporters. Reports such as "Doctors collectively report department heads embezzling tens of millions of yuan and maintaining mistresses with corrupt lifestyles" and "Unveiling the insider information of drug agents: using personal connections to bribe doctors and even engage in sexual transactions in various ways" have left medical staff helplessly accepting labels that have been forcibly affixed in the various described processes.

## 2.2 The rise of "network medical trouble" and rumors to smear the image of "medical personnel"

"Online medical trouble" means that some people fabricate false information and use the Internet to publish false remarks to smear hospitals and medical staff, with the intention to damage the reputation of the injured party, get high compensation, or obtain traffic passwords, so as to achieve their profit purpose <sup>[3]</sup>. In recent years, in the national medical anti-corruption under the big situation, the medical institutions to network public opinion, all hope not to "search", "not" body ", it also gives the "network medical " phenomenon, especially in some media platform, some people through their own platform influence, candid steal video audio, cut to tail, taken out of context and even reverse black and white, create sensational effect to attract attention, in order to achieve the purpose of the pressure on public opinion.

Online medical disturbance will not only infringe on the reputation of medical institutions and medical personnel, but also cause physical and mental harm to the reputation of medical personnel, and bring negative impact and "stigma" trauma to the overall image of "medical personnel". For example, a man in Xiamen, Fujian province, Wu, used the Internet to spread rumors in more than two years, and fabricated false information such as "digging and selling human organs", maliciously injured the hospital and medical staff, causing a large number of negative comments. In 2022, Dr. Zhang Wenhong of Infectious Diseases Department of Huashan Hospital also suffered from network medical disturbance, which virtually destroyed the atmosphere of respecting medicine and valuing health care.

## 2.3 Online populism has magnified the negative image of the "medical staff" group

Network populist refers to produce on the network, through the network spread of a series of populist thought and action, the discourse narrative style antagonistic, emotional and camouflage, discourse production strategy mainly labeled, linking and critical, discourse operation mode is embodied in the discourse rendering, discourse mobilization and discourse monopoly <sup>[4]</sup>. In the traditional doctor-patient relationship, the vast majority of Internet users is vulnerable groups "patients" identity, they tend to network express the emotions as an effective carrier of negative emotions, some problems in the process of diagnosis and treatment, disputes, and even personal mood or poor experience, resort to network exposure this low cost and effective way to seek the support of network public opinion.

The common patterns of online populism include, firstly, controlling public opinion through strategies such as labeling, verbal abuse, sensationalism, spreading false information, and human flesh searches <sup>[5]</sup>; Secondly, using specific discourse or logical structures such as anti-corruption in medicine, difficulty and high cost of medical treatment, kickbacks, and receiving red envelopes, etc., to depict the negative image of the "medical staff" group, using abstract language such as "dean", "director", etc. to transform individual cases into common phenomena, thereby pointing the finger at the entire medical staff group and medical field; Finally, by using so-called "breaking news", extreme remarks, fake news, fake events, etc. to attract the attention of netizens, and using provocative language to attract a crowd of onlookers, a "grand" atmosphere is created, forming the "magic bullet effect". These views and arguments are uncontrollable. Once negative or irrational views dominate public opinion, the truth is likely to be submerged, and there is a risk of exacerbating the stigmatization of medical personnel and causing online public opinion.

## **2.4 The transfer of patients' restlessness and negative emotions under the background of risk society**

Contemporary society is a risk society, which refers to the dilemma faced by human life and the potential survival threat. Especially after the COVID-19, Ulrich Baker's risk theory of society has attracted more attention again <sup>[6]</sup>. In the current social environment in China, on the one hand, people's risk of illness may increase, and the types of diseases become increasingly diverse, especially when major diseases such as cancer cause personal physical harm and heavy material burden on families. When the risk of diseases increases and patients need to deal with these diseases, some patients may experience significant psychological pressure, which often transfers to medical staff; On the other hand, the problem of "expensive medical treatment" still exists to some extent. Many patients spend more on the treatment process than they can afford. At this time, patients and their families often question whether the hospital's fees are reasonable and whether the diagnosis and treatment are standardized. When some hospitals do experience such problems due to profit or improper management, it is inevitable that patients will have negative emotions or even hatred towards the hospital and medical staff <sup>[7]</sup>.

In this risk society, patients' physical insecurity and money insecurity increase. This psychological process may produce negative emotions such as pessimism and hatred, which are easy to turn to medical staff who are closely related to patients. However, under the medical anti-corruption storm, some corruption and high salary problems in the medical system are constantly exposed, which is in sharp contrast to the plight of patients due to illness, thus aggravating the hatred of doctors, and easily causing the "demonization" attack on the medical staff in the real society and the network.

## **3. Suggestions on improving the professional image of medical personnel under the situation of medical anti-corruption**

### **3.1 The news media should strengthen the positive publicity and fair reporting of medical personnel**

Due to the "agenda setting" function of the news media, the issues discussed in a period of time often constitute the central topic of public opinion. Therefore, the media reports of the positive typical figures and typical events of the medical staff can eliminate the negative impact brought by the "stigmatization" to some extent. As the mouthpiece of the Party and the people, the news media should further strengthen the publicity of positive examples of hospitals and medical staff. First, we should increase the search for positive examples of medical staff, not only focusing on famous doctors and experts, but also looking for vivid portraits of different positions, different majors and different characters in this comprehensive group. Secondly, to improve the reporting skills and promote the positive image of medical personnel through the public acceptance and recognition; Thirdly, special attention should be paid to the news reports of medical anti-corruption cases and various medical events with fair language and neutral attitude, not only to cater to the taste of the audience, nor to actively plan and spread group hatred.

### **3.2 We-media platforms should strengthen the audit and supervision of anti-corruption and medical-related content**

Medical anti-corruption cases have seriousness and accuracy. For the release of such cases, TikTok, Xiaohongshu, Toutiao and other we-media platforms should strictly examine and check to avoid the occurrence of "Changzhou a doctor's home found 150 million yuan?" The emergence and

dissemination of false information; medical knowledge is professional and complex. For the release of medical content, we media platform should strengthen the supervision of platform content by improving the account release authority and content review mechanism. In addition, for the malicious creation, dissemination and amplification of "online medical disturbance" and "online medical army" and "Internet water army", their misconduct should also be curbed through platform supervision and technical restrictions.

### **3.3 Medical and health institutions should strengthen the construction of party conduct and clean government, and standardize the internal management system**

As a professional institution for medical personnel, hospitals should promote comprehensive and strict governance of the Party, correct unhealthy practices in the field of pharmaceutical purchase and sales and medical services, establish and improve internal management and control systems, eradicate the breeding ground for corruption from both ideological and institutional perspectives, eliminate illegal and irregular behaviors such as commercial bribery, kickback sharing, and excessive medical treatment by medical personnel, continuously optimize diagnosis and treatment processes with "patient-centered" approach, standardize medical service behavior, and improve medical quality. In addition, hospitals should effectively strengthen ideological and propaganda work, establish and improve public opinion risk warning systems and response mechanisms, maintain good communication and cooperation with local and industry media, and prevent the spread of false information.

### **3.4 Medical personnel should effectively improve their professional skills and moral cultivation**

"Benevol" has always been the highest requirement for medical staff. Medical technology is the foundation of medical personnel, but also the embodiment of the core competitiveness of medical institutions, excellent medical technology is always the basis of a qualified medical personnel. If we want to become excellent medical personnel and establish a truly respected image of medical personnel, noble moral cultivation is an indispensable quality. This requires our medical personnel to continuously strengthen and improve their professional ethics and regularly participate in ideological and political education. At the same time, in the face of patients' emotional needs, medical staff also need to improve their communication skills and abilities, pay attention to their words and deeds, so that patients can fully understand, trust, and cooperate, and establish a good professional image.

### **3.5 Social organizations should actively establish effective communication mechanisms between patients and medical personnel**

In the medical scene, the relatively vulnerable patient groups are often an important driving force for the professional image stigma of medical personnel in the field of public opinion. Therefore, it is necessary for our social organizations, such as various patient alliances, rehabilitation associations, etc., to play an intermediary coordinating role, promote the establishment of effective communication mechanisms between patients, their families, medical staff, and hospitals, and carry out regular social activities. These social organizations, on the one hand, enable patients to form a scientific understanding of their own disease conditions and diagnosis and treatment processes through communication, avoiding excessive expectations from patients and their families; On the other hand, we should strengthen the guidance of patients' cognition and emotions, fully utilize third-party professional forces to establish a psychological health education and counseling system



based on patients' personal characteristics, and control the generation of public opinion from the source.

### 3.6 Relevant government departments should strengthen comprehensive supervision and policy intervention and guidance

Governments at all levels and health administrative departments should accelerate the development of medical and health undertakings, deepen the reform of the medical and health system, strengthen policy intervention and guidance, fundamentally solve the problems of "medical difficulty" and "expensive medical treatment" for the masses, and ensure the public service attribute of the medical industry. The Internet and information departments should constantly improve the legal norms and restrictions of the Internet, strictly enforce the law, strengthen the punishment and crackdown on illegal acts such as "online medical disturbance" and spreading rumors and information, and improve the public opinion environment of medical personnel. The disciplinary inspection and supervision departments should further strengthen supervision, deeply carry out systematic governance in all fields, chains, and coverage of the pharmaceutical industry, truly form an effective mechanism of "dare not be corrupt, cannot be corrupt, and do not want to be corrupt" within the medical system, and create a good atmosphere for establishing the professional image of medical personnel.

## 4. Conclusion

Anti-corruption in medicine is a profound and arduous reform task, which needs the participation and support of the whole society. However, while strengthening supervision and accountability and severely punishing corruption, the whole "medical staff" should not be stigmatized because of a few cases "blind trees". At the commendation meeting for China's fight against the COVID-19, the leaders praised "the majority of medical personnel in China are people with a high sense of responsibility", "the most beautiful angel, the most lovely person in the new era!" This is a high appraisal of the performance of the majority of medical personnel in the fight against the epidemic, and also a full affirmation of their daily respect for life, saving the dying and healing the wounded, and being willing to contribute. At any time, people's respect for the medical staff group should become a positive energy in society. Although anti-corruption in medicine has brought certain negative impacts on the reputation of medical staff in the short term, reshaping and improving the professional image that is currently in a "low point" still requires joint efforts from multiple aspects. With the deepening of anti-corruption actions and healthcare reform, it will inevitably help purify the ecosystem of the healthcare system and restore the good image of medical personnel in the long run.

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