

WORKING PEOPLE OF THE WHOLE WORLD, UNITE!

# **KIM JONG IL**

## **ON BRINGING ABOUT A REVOLUTIONARY IMPROVEMENT IN THE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE IN ORDER TO DISPLAY TO THE FULL THE ADVANTAGES OF THE SOCIALIST HEALTHCARE SYSTEM**

Talk to Senior Officials of the Central Committee  
of the Workers' Party of Korea  
*October 7, Juche 100 (2011)*

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A decisive improvement needs to be made in our public health service.

The public health service, since its purpose is to safeguard lives and improve people's health, is one of the most important features of our people-centred socialist society and a basic undertaking aimed at stabilizing and raising the quality of life.

People, if they are unhealthy, cannot display great mental strength and creativity, fulfil their revolutionary tasks or enjoy a genuinely worthwhile and happy life.

Only when they are healthy can they work and live, filled with vigour and enthusiasm, and be fully committed to their labour and national defence.

Our socialist healthcare system was bequeathed to us by the great Comrade Kim Il Sung, and achieving a decisive improvement in the public health service is now a key political task for defending it and displaying its advantages to the utmost and an urgent requirement of the present situation.

Under our most advantageous people-oriented healthcare system, the Party and the state assume full responsibility for caring for the lives and health of the people.

Its advantages are evident in the system and policy of complete and universal free medical care.

From birth, everyone in our country has the right to free medical treatment. Hospitals and clinics are located in every urban centre and rural village so that, wherever they are living, people enjoy convenient access to medical treatment.

Our people know nothing of such expressions as *outpatient service charges*, *price of medicine*, *operation charges*, and *inpatient service charges*.

Under the district doctor system, doctors check the health of the people in their charge on a regular basis and take an immediate action when a problem occurs.

Our public health institutions and workers feel it as their natural duty and an honourable task to take responsibility for and protect the lives and health of the people, and our medical personnel routinely perform such ennobling and laudable deeds as donating their blood, skin and even bones to the sick.

All this testifies to the validity, advantages and great vitality of our country's socialist public health system and the people-oriented public health policy of the Party and state—a system and policy that would be unimaginable in capitalist society, where money rules

everything and the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

However, the deterioration in our country's economic situation in the 1990s, particularly since the start of the Arduous March, impacted the public health sector, like other sectors, and the aftereffects are still being felt.

Today, public health is one of the backward sectors in our country and is failing to display to the full the advantages of the socialist healthcare system.

Some hospitals have outdated medical facilities and are not being provided with sufficient medical appliances and supplies.

The unsatisfactory production and supply of medicines is impeding the efforts to prevent and cure diseases.

This is the case, to varying degrees, not only at regional hospitals but even at central ones.

Comrade Kim Il Sung established the most advantageous socialist healthcare system and universal free medical care over half a century ago, but its advantages are currently dwindling. We must not tolerate this.

The country's public health service has come to this pass because officials of the Cabinet, the Ministry of

Public Health, other ministries and national agencies concerned and government organs at all levels have neglected public health work. Because of their defeatist attitude, they have failed to make persistent efforts to carry out the Party's people-oriented public health policy.

If they had approached the work in a revolutionary and audacious manner, displaying the revolutionary soldier spirit in accordance with the Party's idea and intention, they could have defended and glorified our socialist healthcare system, despite the country's economic situation and the difficulties they encountered.

In recent years, however, they have lost motivation and, while complaining about their poor working conditions, virtually neglected public health work.

So, I severely criticized the officials concerned and took radical steps to bring about a revolutionary improvement in the public health sector.

Only then did officials at the Ministry of Public Health and elsewhere come to their senses and, by setting out to implement the Party's public health policy, achieve a certain degree of progress in their work.

The material and technological foundations are

now being laid for bringing about a turn in the production of medicines and medical appliances, and a number of successes have been recorded in providing a more hygienic and civilized environment at hospitals at all levels.

However, all this falls far short of a comprehensive overhaul of the public health service.

The senior and all other officials of the Cabinet, the Ministry of Public Health, other ministries and national agencies concerned and regional Party and government organs should deeply cherish the ennobling intention of Comrade Kim Il Sung in ensuring that the universal free medical system was proclaimed and introduced during the arduous days of the Fatherland Liberation War. They should also uphold with a revolutionary faith and indomitable will the Songun politics, benevolent politics and energetic leadership of the Party which, when we were enduring the unprecedented hardships of the Arduous March, did everything possible to defend the people's lives and safety and improve their health, and to stabilize and raise the quality of their life. By doing so they can add eternal brilliance to the advantages of the socialist healthcare system bequeathed to us by the leader.

We should completely eradicate the disorder and

non-socialist practices revealed in public health work, ensure that it is put back on a normal track in all aspects and, furthermore, demonstrate to the full the advantages of our socialist healthcare system.

We should effect a major change in our work, so that in every aspect the public health service, from the construction of modern hospitals and other medical service establishments, to the production of medicines and appliances and the modernization and scientification of disease treatment and prevention, is raised to the highest possible level, as required by the Songun era and for building a powerful socialist country.

To this end, above all, officials of the state economic guidance organs, public health organs and government organs at all levels should rid themselves of their misguided attitude and viewpoint that led them to neglect public health work, and should establish a revolutionary climate of regarding the Party's people-oriented public health policy as absolute and implementing it unconditionally.

In particular, those at the Ministry of Public Health and others in the public health sector should, by acting more responsibly and effectively, bring about a radical improvement in their approach to, and style of, work.

Only then will they be able to organize and develop the overall public health service in a revolutionary and militant manner, as required by the Party's ideas, intentions and policies.

A decisive improvement should be made in the state's management of and support for the public health service.

The leader long ago said that the universal free medical system enforced in our country presupposes state investment and support, and that the country could enforce this system not because it had enough money but because it valued people's lives and health so highly. He often stressed the need for the state to take responsibility for this work and ensure sufficient supplies for it.

The Cabinet, the State Planning Commission, the Ministry of Public Health and other ministries and national agencies, government organs at different levels and all officials should strictly follow the leader's instructions for improving the public health service and implement them to the letter.

For the present, we should press ahead with rebuilding the hospitals, the basic units of the public health service, in line with hygienic and medical requirements, perfecting their features as centres for

medical treatment, and modernizing central and regional hospitals.

Our country has very few modern hospitals that it can be proud of before the world.

In the past, under the Party's leadership, we built the Pyongyang Maternity Hospital, to the envy of the world; in recent years we have built the Academy of Koryo Medicine, the General Dental Hospital, a specialist ophthalmic hospital and the like, but we must never rest content with this.

We should upgrade the existing hospitals on the basis of the latest science and technology, as befitting hospitals of a powerful socialist country; at the same time, we should build new up-to-date central and specialist hospitals.

Hospitals in provinces, cities and counties, as well as factory hospitals and hospitals and clinics in rural villages, should be modernized in conformity with their specific situation.

If a radical improvement is to be made in the public health service, it is essential to put the production of medicines and medical appliances on a modern and scientific basis.

Otherwise, we cannot bring about a change in this work.

The pharmaceuticals industry should adopt proactive measures for mass-producing high-quality medicines in large quantities.

In line with Party policies, the Ministry of Public Health should work with this industry to direct primary efforts at achieving a decisive increase in the production of household and over-the-counter medicines, including antibiotics, digestants, antipyretics and brain metabolic stimulants, so as to satisfy the demand for them.

At the same time, they should work proactively to research and develop new, effective medicines that can be widely used in treatment and prevention.

The pharmaceuticals industry should, in line with the instructions I gave during my field guidance there, modernize the Hungnam Pharmaceuticals Factory at a high level and as soon as possible. With this factory as a model, it should then upgrade other pharmaceuticals factories. The sectors concerned, including the chemicals industry, should establish strict discipline whereby the raw and other materials and the technical means needed for manufacturing medicines are produced and supplied in time and without fail.

A major effort should be directed to the production of Koryo medicines, including insam, deer's antler

and other tonics. The physical side-effects of these traditional medicines are negligible, but they are effective in treatment—characteristics that make them superior to Western medicines.

The sector in charge of Koryo medicine production should mass-produce efficacious and easy-to-take traditional medicines by making use of the various medicinal herbs and materials that are abundant in our country, with a view to them taking the lion's share in solving the problem of medicines.

It should upgrade other factories, following the example of the Kanggye Koryo Medicine Factory, which has been transformed into a magnificent facility under the leadership of the Party, and hold fast to the Party's policy of producing Koryo medicines in a scientific way and in the form of extracts.

We should establish the discipline of ensuring that all medicines, whether Western or traditional, are standardized and registered by the state.

Revolutionary measures should be adopted for producing and supplying modern, high-quality medical appliances.

We have sent a satellite into orbit, created a strong nuclear deterrent, raised IT to the most advanced level and introduced CNC technology in the machine-

building and other sectors; so, there is no reason why we cannot produce modern medical appliances.

The Cabinet, the Ministry of Public Health and other sectors concerned should hold fast to and carry out the Party's policy on producing modern medical apparatuses and appliances by our own efforts.

Factories and enterprises in the medical appliances field should modernize their production lines on the basis of the latest science and technology and increase the output and improve the quality of diagnostic and treatment apparatuses and medical appliances as appropriate to our specific situation.

The Ministry of Public Health and the Academy of Medical Sciences, in cooperation with the State Academy of Sciences, should make energetic efforts to develop and produce modern medical apparatuses, including ultrasound diagnostic equipment, electrocardiographs, and apparatuses for dental and ophthalmic treatment.

They should also mass-produce high-quality medical appliances such as syringes, thermometers, sphygmomanometers and stethoscopes, as well as disposables including bandages, gauze and cotton wool, to meet demand.

A dynamic, bold struggle should be waged to

develop and produce the latest medical equipment and appliances.

It is laudable that the Ministry of Public Health proposed repurposing the Mangyongdae X-ray Equipment Factory as an electronic medical appliances factory.

This should be undertaken resolutely.

The Cabinet and the sectors concerned should render active support to this project.

The matter of importing state-of-the-art medical appliances factories should also be studied, even though it will entail spending some of the state budget.

It will allow us to produce modern X-ray, CT and other cutting-edge medical apparatuses for ourselves.

Along with doing all we can to increase the production of medicines and medical appliances and supplies, it is important to ensure that medical materials, once produced, are properly supplied.

Hospitals should receive medicines as appropriate to the features of the local areas and population, and medical apparatuses and appliances according to their size and characteristics and specialist requirements.

Strict discipline and order should be established by which the state coordinates the provision of medicines and other medical supplies, be they domestically-

produced or imported, and strict legal controls should be enforced to eliminate the illegal trade in medicines.

Otherwise, the provision of medicines and other medical supplies may lapse into chaos, and fake and toxic medicines may spread that have a damaging effect on people's lives and health.

If we are to display the advantages of the socialist healthcare system to the full, we must bring about a turn in medical treatment and preventive work so as to ensure a satisfactorily high level of effectiveness in protecting and promoting people's lives and health.

In this way, we can raise average life expectancy, increase attendance at delivery and step up the prevention of infectious diseases, while reducing the infant mortality rate; then, before too long, we will not only meet the global health indices in these areas, but even lead the world.

This is a key target our Party has set for the public health sector and a fighting task we can surely and must carry out without fail under our country's socialist healthcare system.

The key criterion in medical treatment is the devotion of the doctors and other medical personnel.

Devotion is a key attribute and the lifeblood of a socialist public health service.

However skilled they may be, doctors cannot treat their patients properly if they are not devoted.

As engineers of human life, they should display utmost sincerity and energy in treating the patients in their charge, with the attitude of taking ultimate responsibility for their lives and health, and they should explore and apply every possible means and method to ensure the success of their treatment.

Only those who devote their all can be called faithful medical personnel of our Party and genuine medical workers of People's Korea.

Medical personnel should work strenuously to build up a rich store of medical scientific and technical knowledge and clinical experience. The only way they can acquire a high level of scientific and technical qualifications is through hard study and inquiry and diligent clinical practice.

If they display complete devotion supported by a high level of medical scientific and technical expertise, they can save patients, even from the jaws of death, and cure any disease.

Treatment methods should also be continuously improved and developed.

There are countless types of disease, and the symptoms differ according to the patient's gender, age

and physical constitution. So, a uniform treatment plan cannot guarantee a successful cure.

Treatment should be carried out in accordance with the characteristics of each disease; to this end, medical workers should master a range of effective remedies.

It is also beneficial in treating patients for doctors, departments and even hospitals, if needed, to conduct collective consultations, and cooperate.

In particular, in putting medical treatment on a modern, scientific basis, such methods as organ transplant, laser therapy, laparoscopic surgery and gene therapy should be introduced proactively.

The Party's policy on preventive medicine should be thoroughly implemented.

Our socialist medicine is preventive medicine.

This is clearly indicative of the ennobling people-oriented character of our medicine, which is fundamentally different from capitalist medicine, which gives illness first and then medicine.

Thanks to the Party's policy on preventive medicine, our country could fully stop the infiltration of AIDS, which is cutting a wide swathe through the world, and halt the infiltration and spread of SARS, avian flu and other contagious diseases.

The public health sector should further intensify the efforts to maintain more sanitary and civilized working and living conditions and prevent the spread of disease. To this end, it should establish a well-regulated system of hygiene and anti-epidemic measures and enhance the functions and role of the hygiene and anti-epidemic organs.

In particular, it should organize more strictly the work of preventing the infiltration of SARS, AIDS and other global epidemics, and by doing so display more fully the advantages and vitality of our Party's policy on preventive medicine.

At the same time, it should adopt comprehensive measures for treating and preventing such contagious diseases as tuberculosis, hepatitis and parasitosis.

Our medical personnel should join the effort to eradicate all contagious diseases with the confidence that they can do so under our system if their treatment and prevention work is stepped up and the people's living standards are improved rapidly, in line with the Party's ideas and intentions.

The public health sector should further develop the district doctor system.

Comrade Kim Il Sung established this system, in which medical workers in charge of certain residential

areas take care of the health of the local population on an on-going basis; he said long ago that the number of families in the charge of each doctor under the system should be reduced gradually so as to improve the quality of the medical service.

True to his intention, we should increase the number of doctors, decrease the number of families under the charge of each one, and provide doctors with every condition they need for committing themselves fully to caring for the health of residents.

The public health sector should establish a proper combination of Koryo and modern medicine.

Developing Koryo medicine by combining it with modern medicine is an important policy of our Party.

Koryo medicine is the traditional medicine of the Korean nation, and our ancestors treated their illnesses and improved their health with its help.

In Koryo medicine, the patients' pulses are examined to diagnose their conditions, and special therapies such as acupuncture, moxibustion, cupping and massage are employed to treat them and improve their health, along with medicines prepared from natural materials.

These traditional therapies, since they were created and have developed historically on the basis of our

ancestors' talent, wisdom and clinical experience, are highly effective and have many advantages.

We should value and prioritize Koryo medicine and develop it as required by the times, on the principle of maintaining the Juche character and preserving the national identity of the public health sector.

Only when we develop Koryo and modern medicine in proper combination can public health work overall achieve faster progress at a higher level in such areas as treatment and prevention and the promotion of Juche-oriented medical science and technology.

To this end, medical and all other workers in these sectors should respect and consult one another and step up their mutual assistance and cooperation.

However, this working spirit is currently very weak.

This is attributable to the attitude of medical personnel in the public health sector, from its senior officials down to those at hospitals at all levels, who regard our traditional medicine as insignificant and unworthy.

Such being the case, they are failing to ensure the proper combination of Koryo and modern medicine, to share the merits and overcome the demerits of each

and, in particular, to develop our traditional medicine at the high speed as required by the times.

The main thing in developing Koryo medicine is to step up the study of its features and advantages and, at the same time, put its treatment methods and the production of the associated medicines on a scientific and modern basis. This can only be realized with the proactive assistance of officials and other workers in the field of modern medicine.

On the other hand, only when modern medicine values the advantages and merits of Koryo medicine and introduces them sincerely, in line with scientific and technical principles, can overall treatment and preventive work be further developed.

In order to carry out the Party's policy on developing Koryo and modern medicine in proper combination, it is necessary, for the present, to take steps to increase the number of workers in the sector of Koryo medicine and to specialize in traditional therapies.

At present, each central, provincial, city and county hospital has only one general department dealing with Koryo medicine, staffed by a handful of doctors.

In this situation, it is impossible to develop our traditional medicine, put it on a scientific and modern

basis, and achieve a proper combination and cooperation between it and modern medicine.

A specialized Koryo medicine department should be established according to the scale and features of each hospital, the size of its staff increased, and the position of vice-director in charge of traditional treatment established.

Hospitals should also introduce a proper work system and methodology for developing Koryo and modern medicine in proper combination, as required by the Party's policy, in order to ensure that the policy is fully implemented.

In medical treatment and prevention, it is a good idea to make active use of our country's abundant hot spring and other mineral water resources.

Hot springs and other mineral waters can be found all across our country, and sanatoria, health resorts and holiday camps, as well as houses for rent, have been built there.

Making proper use of them can prove effective in treating illness and protecting people's health.

The Ministry of Public Health and the sectors concerned should develop sanatoria, health resorts and holiday camps and ensure that they operate properly so that people can make effective use of the mineral

waters for treating their illnesses and promoting their health.

In order to raise our public health service to the cutting-edge standard, medical science and technology need to undergo rapid and comprehensive development.

Thanks to the Party's commitment to breaking through the cutting-edge, and under its energetic leadership, science and technology in our country have witnessed radical development, but medical science and technology remain relatively backward compared to other fields.

This is the IT era, the era of the knowledge-driven economy, and the times demand that medical science and technology should also be raised to the cutting-edge level.

If medical science and technology are to make rapid progress, above all the Academy of Medical Sciences, the Academy of Koryo Medicine and other research institutions should play a more prominent role.

The two academies are central organs that have been put in charge of research into the country's medical science and technology by the Party and state.

They should enlist the institutes and researchers

under their control in their efforts to solve the important and most pressing scientific and technical problems and, in particular, to develop the latest medical science and technology that can be adopted in medical treatment and disease prevention.

They should draw up proper plans for developing the country's medical science and technology in line with the requirements of Party policies, the reality and world trends in this regard, and implement them one by one and in stages.

The scientists, technicians and workers in the public health sector, including those at medical science institutions, true to the Party's call to keep our feet firmly planted on our own land while looking out over the world, should all turn out to effect a great change in medical science and technology by displaying a sharp insight into the contemporary situation and ardent creative enthusiasm.

By concentrating, among other things, on putting therapy on a scientific footing, developing efficacious medicines and updating medical apparatuses, they should break through the cutting-edge.

They should readjust and expand telemedicine linking the capital city with the provinces, cities and counties, ensure that it functions properly, introduce

IT into medical services and raise hospital management to a high scientific level.

They should also work proactively to introduce advanced medical science and technology from other countries, in accordance with our reality.

We should send our public health officials, scientists and technicians for visits and internships to other countries with more advanced medical technology, and conduct active exchange in all aspects of medical science and technology with other countries.

In order to bring the advantages of the socialist healthcare system into full play, medical schools and other educational institutions in the public health sector should develop the training of talented medical science and technology personnel on a long-term basis.

Medical schools should build up the ranks of their teaching staff and modernize their material and technical foundations so as to turn out medical personnel, scientists and technicians with high political, ideological, scientific and technical qualifications.

The quality of education largely depends on the qualifications and role of the teachers, which in turn are

evidenced by the academic attainments of students.

Mindful of their noble mission in training engineers of human life, the teachers at medical schools and other educational institutions in the public health sector should direct every effort to raising the education they offer to the highest possible level, as required by our socialist healthcare system and our Party's people-oriented policy on public health.

These schools should provide effective basic and theoretical education so that their students, building on what they have learned, can acquire the latest medical scientific and technical information in their specialist field, and apply it in practice.

They should step up the teaching of foreign languages so that students can, by reading literature and other materials from abroad, gain access to the latest medical science and technology and build up rich clinical experience through experiments and internships.

A well-knit system of training nurses as well as doctors and pharmacists should be established so as to produce qualified nurses in a systematic way.

The state management of and material support for public health are the cornerstone of the socialist public health service.

In our socialist healthcare system, based as it is on universal free medical care, its advantages and vitality cannot be fully displayed, nor can public health work develop, without proper state management and material, technical and financial support.

Officials of the Cabinet, the State Planning Commission, the Ministry of Public Health, other ministries and national agencies concerned, as well as government organs in the provinces, cities and counties, should draw a lesson from their past misguided approach to their work and bring about a decisive improvement in the guidance and management of, and support for, public health work.

The Cabinet should establish a rational system of state guidance and management over public health work and meet in full the demand for the medicines, medical equipment and materials, as well as funds, needed by the public health service. This will make it possible to achieve, in a short span of time, a major overall advance in the health service.

Hospitals and other facilities in the public health sector need to be supplied with electricity, fuel and ambulances.

The Cabinet, the State Planning Commission and the Ministry of Public Health, while guiding and

managing the nationwide health service, should take direct charge of the public health service in the capital and major sectors and establish strict discipline for ensuring the planned and detailed supply of materials, technology and finance for them.

Provincial, city and county government organs should improve their sense of responsibility and role in guiding regional public health services.

Those in cities and counties in particular, by doing so, can build up and operate the hospitals and clinics in cities, counties and ri by their own efforts, and modernize medical treatment and prevention as suited to the local conditions.

The senior and all other officials of our state economic guidance organs, public health organs and government organs at all levels should act responsibly and with complete commitment in carrying out the noble mission they have assumed for the public health service. In this way, they can give fuller play to the advantages and might of our socialist healthcare system and make the whole world envious of it.

Improved Party guidance over public health work is essential for bringing about a revolutionary improvement in it.

Only when Party organizations at all levels hold

fast to the Party's policy on public health and encourage officials and the working people to carry it out, can they shore up the country's public health work promptly and ensure that it makes rapid progress.

Party organizations should all organize and wage an aggressive and dynamic organizational and political campaign to effect major innovations in public health work.

They should bring the Party's policy on public health home to the officials in this sector and the units concerned, and lead and inspire them to fully implement it.

They should combine political and policy-oriented guidance properly in their leadership over the public health sector so that officials and the working people can display the high level of revolutionary enthusiasm and creativity needed for firmly defending and implementing the Party's policy on public health; and if any deviation appears in its implementation, they should correct it promptly.

Party organizations in the public health sector should ensure that public health workers display a high sense of organization with which they establish the spirit of taking part voluntarily and sincerely in

their organizational life and live and work under their organization's guidance, and that they train themselves in a revolutionary manner through their organizational life.

They should conduct ideological education among public health workers as suited to the features of their work.

They should pay particularly close attention to educating all public health workers to display ardent love for their fellow humans and sincere devotion in treating the sick.

At the same time, they should produce many able medical workers, famous doctors and doctors with specialist skills by directing great efforts to improving the scientific and technical qualifications of medical and other public health workers.

Under the guidance of Party organizations, hospitals and other public health organs should place the main emphasis on, and subordinate everything to, medical treatment and prevention.

To this end, Party organizations at all levels should strengthen Party-wide control and supervision to eradicate the practices of giving random social assignments to hospitals and other public health organs and seconding doctors, pharmacists and nurses

for projects that have nothing to do with medical treatment and prevention.

Officials of the Party, of state economic organs and of the public health sector should hold fast to and carry out the Party's policy on public health with a revolutionary faith and conscience. In this way they can defend the socialist healthcare system of our people-centred country that was built by Comrade Kim Il Sung, and add eternal brilliance to its advantages and might as required by the times, the revolution and the building of a powerful nation.

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