

Organizational activity of S.V. Kurashov in establishing and developing of national medicine and health care (to the 110th anniversary of the birth of S.V. Kurashov)

A.N. Galiullin, A.V. Shulaev, I.M. Burykin

Kazan state medical University, Kazan, Russia

Abstract

The article provides information about the organizational activities and role of S.V. Kurashov in establishing and developing of national medicine and health care in the USSR and his contribution to the organization of health resorts, medical industry, pharmacy. The data on the improvement of outpatient specialized medical care for the population, the dynamics of health care in the USSR in 1950–1965, and the implementation of national programs to eliminate especially dangerous infections in the country are detailed. The paper shows the role of S.V. Kurashov in the training of medical personnel, the construction of multi-specialty hospitals in rural areas, allowing to provide specialized outpatient and inpatient medical care, in the country's accession to the World Health Organization in Geneva, which increased the importance of the USSR health care in the international arena.

Keywords: S.V. Kurashov, USSR, medicine and healthcare.

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This year marks the 110th birth anniversary of a prominent statesman, outstanding pioneer of Soviet health care, Associate Member of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) Academy of Medical Sciences, scientist, teacher, and doctor, Professor Sergey Vladimirovich Kurashov [1].

S.V. Kurashov was born on October 01, 1910 in the family of a railway worker at Berestyanka of the Moscow-Ryazan railway. After graduation from school in 1926, S.V. Kurashov entered the Saratov Veterinary Institute. However, during his studies, he realized that his interest lay in the study of human health and disease and how to effectively improve health care and the general health of the population. With this in mind, in 1928, he transferred to the medical faculty of Kazan University [2] and continued his education.

In 1931, he received a doctor's degree from the Kazan State Medical Institute and in the same year entered clinical residency, followed by a postgraduate training program, and obtained a degree in psychiatry [3].

In 1935, S.V. Kurashov was appointed as chief physician of the clinical hospital of the Kazan State

Medical Institute (KSMI), and a year later, he became chief physician of the Kazan Psychiatric Hospital of the People's Commissariat of Public Health of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) and the chief psychiatrist of the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic [4, 5].

A year later, in 1939, after defending his thesis "On the use of subcutaneous oxygen injection in psychiatric practice," S.V. Kurashov was approved as an assistant professor at the Department of Psychiatry [6]. In 1940, S.V. Kurashov was awarded the honorary title of Honored Doctor of the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic.

In 1941, he became a director of the KSMI [7]. The fruitful activity of the young, active, and energetic director of the medical institute was noticed by high-level executives of the central health authorities of the RSFSR and the USSR [8]. Many employees of the Ministry of Health of the RSFSR and the USSR were convinced of the professionalism of S.V. Kurashov, when he was involved in evacuation in Kazan, and made them take a closer look and evaluate his administrative abilities, purposeful nature, and performance capability [9].

On March 25, 1942, S.V. Kurashov was appointed as Deputy People's Commissar of Health of the RSFSR. These were the war years, and the new appointment implied a lot of work. Indeed, the nation was exerting its forces on two fronts, namely, on the battlefield as well as work in the back end. S.V. Kurashov was young (he turned 31), energetic, and confident in his abilities when he took over.

His numerous challenges included provision of everything possible for the wounded on the front line, in the forward edge of battle areas, evacuation hospitals to strengthen the fight against morbidity in the rear areas, to pay special attention to the health of workers, especially those employed in the defense industry. With the beginning of the Red Army offensive in the country, many difficulties arose in the organization of medical care in the liberated regions, in the restoration of hospitals, clinics, and other health care institutions. Many disabled veterans, former soldiers of the Red Army, continued to enter. Taking care of them required S.V. Kurashov to make out of the box and non-standard management decisions. Sergey Vladimirovich conducted a thorough study of the situation and the need for specialized medical care for this group (this is described in the work "Poly-clinic service for the Patriotic War disabled veterans," 1944).

During the period when S.V. Kurashov held charge of resorts and sanatoriums in the USSR (1946–1951), he attached great importance to the issues of health resort treatment as an important segment of rehabilitation treatment. In conversations with representatives of medicine from Kazan, Sergey Vladimirovich said that he dreamed of building sanatoriums and resorts for the working people along the entire coast of the country's southern seas (memoirs of the KSMI professor Fedor Timofeevich Krasnopyorov).

Having become the head of the Main Directorate of Resorts and Sanatoriums of the USSR Ministry of Health, S.V. Kurashov was at the forefront of the creation of a program for the restoration and development of sanatorium-and-health-resort assistance to the population during the first post-war five-year period. During these years, standard staff were introduced, uniform profiles of institutions were established, a plan for research activities was developed, conditions necessary for training manpower for local and republican resorts as well as sanatoriums were created. Under S.V. Kurashov's guidance, the formalization of a comprehensive guide about the resorts of the USSR was started, which was later published under his editorship.

From 1951 to 1953, S.V. Kurashov worked as the head of Department of Educational Institutions of



the USSR Ministry of Health. In 1953, he was appointed as Deputy Minister of Health of the USSR. However, he continued to remain deeply interested and involved in the problems of medical education during his entire life, as he realized that only intensive training of qualified doctors could lay the foundation to improve and revamp the entire healthcare system.

In 1955, S.V. Kurashov was appointed as Minister of Health of the RSFSR, and in 1959, he became a Minister of Health of the USSR [10]. During these years, his outstanding organizational and administrative capabilities were revealed. By this time, he had already emerged as a prominent leader in the health care system and a prominent scientist in the field of social hygiene and organization of health care. He already had his own concept and ideas for improving health care in the RSFSR and the USSR. He outlined his program and tasks for restructuring the role of health care institutions in his speeches and debates at the All-Union meeting of health care workers, held by the USSR Ministry of Health in Moscow from October 23 to 27, 1956.

S.V. Kurashov emphasized in his speech the importance of modifying the very structure of medical institutions, and underscored the need to start restructuring with the medical and sanitary units. He said: "A sectorial therapist of a medical and sanitary unit of an enterprise treats a patient only as long as he is on his feet, but at the most difficult time of the disease, the patient is deprived of his attention. In addition, sectorial doctors are out of touch with the district's sanitary and public health activities. Medical and sanitary units should be included in the district health care system, as a result of which they would receive an additional 8000 doctors and 16–18 thousand nursing staff on the scale of the RSFSR. Thus, it would be possible to decentralize territorial units, which will enable district doctors to be engaged in dispensary work" [11].

Before S.V. Kurashov, there were several miscalculations in planning the development of health care in the regions and autonomous republics. Health care expenditures in the RSFSR per capita by regions and autonomous republics in 1956 showed wide fluctuations (145 rubles on average in the RSFSR, 64 rubles in the Belgorod region), and they also differed greatly between urban and rural areas (199 rubles in cities and 87 rubles in rural areas), as well as in different settlements of the same region.

Moreover, more than half of the rural regional and district hospitals did not meet the necessary sanitary and technical requirements, with poor hygienic conditions, and worse still, many hospitals were in a state of disrepair.

This existing scenario in the health care system formed the basis for the development and implementation of a program to strengthen the material and technical base of medical and preventive treatment institutions in rural areas and determined the activities of S.V. Kurashov as Minister of Health of the RSFSR. Some of his earliest proposals as Minister of Health of the RSFSR included the following [12]:

1) Strengthen the resource base of higher and secondary educational medical institutions of the Urals, Siberia, and the Far East, in order to provide these areas with personnel from among the local youth;

2) Improve the foundation for training doctors and improve the quality of their training;

3) While planning the training of secondary medical personnel, provide for a larger number of them in comparison with doctors, thereby allowing them the prospect of growth;

4) Draw up a health care plan that not only reflects network indicators, but also includes major events related to the improvement of labor and everyday life of the population, improvement of sanitary conditions and the elimination of widespread diseases;

5) Abolish rigid regulation and transfer a number of functions of the union ministry to the ministries of the union republics, who in turn need to do the same in relation to regions, territories, and autonomous republics;

6) Emphasize the importance of outpatient services for the population and not to link its reporting with the reporting of hospitals;

7) Restore the previously existing procedure for determine the wage fund allocation to health authorities in the budget policy without taking into account the number of medical workers.

S.V. Kurashov was able to highlight the key factors needing improvement, relying on his practice, experience, profound knowledge in many areas of

medicine, and his unimaginable scale of thinking. The protection of public health had always been his main task. His proposed plan to change the health care system as we see it now, has been largely promising. A lot has been achieved by following his suggestions. Being a talented scientist and a genuine organizer as well as a visionary, he thought in terms of the future. Much of his legacy was included in the Fundamentals of Legislation of the USSR and the Union Republics on Health Care, adopted by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in 1969 after the death of Sergey Vladimirovich.

During the period when S.V. Kurashov was the Minister of Health of the RSFSR and the Minister of Health of the USSR (1955–1965), the national economy that had been ravaged by the war was restored, a strong technical and infrastructural foundation was laid for the development of medicine, the organization of health care, and the training of qualified medical personnel.

Under S.V. Kurashov, the medical industry and pharmacy were developed. Serious attention was paid to children, mothers, and patients with tuberculosis. The importance of early recognition, effective treatment and prevention of diseases such as cardiovascular problems, cancer, and infectious diseases was recognized and suitable measures implemented. This was mentioned in the decree of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Council of Ministers of the USSR, “On measures to further improve medical care and health protection of the population of the USSR” as of January 14, 1960.

Important organizational, scientific, and technical achievements in the field of health care, advances in treatment, as well as significant progress in the field of sanitary and public health services have brought Russia international appreciation. Not to be left unsaid, Soviet scientists have shared generously their achievements with foreign colleagues.

The main issues of interest in the scientific research of S.V. Kurashov and his administrative activities included the health issues faced by children and adolescents, reduction of maternal and child mortality. “The protection of children’s health is a nationwide affair,” — said S.V. Kurashov. He considered child mortality to be one of the main indicators of the status of health care and sanitary condition of the population. In addition to the economic and cultural status of households, he identified other rather common causes of early infant mortality, such as birth trauma and intracranial hemorrhage due to poor-quality obstetrics, non-observance of the regimen and rules of caring for children in maternity hospitals, and wrong feeding habits. “Health protection is the best prevention of morbidity, the fundamental basis for the health of

my nation,” he used to say. In his speeches and lectures S.V. Kurashov emphasized the importance of the role of nurseries, kindergartens, boarding schools, and day schools in prevention of childhood diseases. He emphasized the need for physical education of children and their tempering, criticized the early switch of the child to artificial feeding practiced in the USA and France, as well as substantiated the positive role of breastfeeding, and was a strong advocate for social and medical assistance to mothers [13].

S.V. Kurashov observed several imperfections in medical care in the countryside. He was against “dwarf” (10–15 beds) hospitals with a poor infrastructural base, which were unprofitable and not staffed with basic specialists (therapists, surgeons, obstetricians-gynecologists, etc.), and did not provide proper qualified treatment and lacked a service mentality toward patients. He proposed reorganization of small hospitals into medical outpatient clinics and suggested the construction of new, larger, powerful hospitals with 300–400 beds, where rural residents would be able to receive all types of specialized care. With the joint efforts of the collective farms, the construction of inter-collective-farm hospitals with 50–70 beds was started.

At the same time S.V. Kurashov believed that the reorganization of small district hospitals into medical outpatient clinics should be performed thoughtfully, so as not to harm the population because of suboptimal medical care due to the lack of inpatient care in district and city hospitals. Aiming to replace gradually the medical assistant’s work with doctors, he believed that the numbers of medical assistant-obstetric stations had to be reduced, leaving the function of providing preventive and first-aid medical care to the medical assistants. However, obstetric care in the countryside needed to be implemented in all medical centers, such as medical assistant and obstetric clinics, collective farm maternity hospitals, and when reorganizing small district hospitals into medical outpatient clinics, it was necessary to plan several maternity beds for women in labor. In his opinion, the rural population had to be provided with round-the-clock outpatient and specialized care.

S.V. Kurashov elaborated on the organizational structure of medical care in the countryside and attached significance to topographic, administrative, and economic conditions, as well as types of settlement of residents in the countryside, population density (to take into account the planning of medical care), climate, living conditions, morbidity by nosological forms, characteristics of modern agricultural production, etc., while planning rural health care reforms.

Sergey Vladimirovich noted the elements of rapprochement between the city and the countryside in terms of migration processes, employment in industry, as well as the level of medical care. He foresaw the improvement of medical care in the countryside under the conditions, if regional hospitals are enlarged according to the needs of the population, fully equipped with modern equipment, staffed with doctors of basic specialties, if sanitary and epidemiological stations are also strengthened, dental departments or offices with a dental laboratory are organized, and outpatient and polyclinic care for the rural population are organized on a district basis, as in a city.

S.V. Kurashov attached great significance not only to the general preventive orientation of Soviet health care, but also to improvement of polyclinic services for the population. Polyclinics, in his opinion, are economically viable, have the possibility of mass coverage of the population, and their advanced development is a fundamental right as compared to the development of inpatient care. “A polyclinic as a type of institution is inherent only in Soviet health care,” said S.V. Kurashov.

S.V. Kurashov has done a lot of work to develop health services for the population by district doctors. The expansion of the network of therapeutic districts (territorial, section), as well as districts covered by child health care, in his opinion, would help to greatly improve the quality of preventive and clinical work among children of industrial workers.

Over the years, under the guidance of S.V. Kurashov in the field of health care, there have been major developments, namely the bed network exceeded two million beds, and the number of doctors became more than half a million. Much attention was paid to the development of the medical and pharmaceutical industries. New educational and scientific institutions (secondary and higher) were opened, the number of scientific research institutions increased; serious attention was paid to the training of specialists in all specialties, including dentists, and dental care has now reached an unprecedented level [14].

Rich tribute should be paid to S.V. Kurashov in that it was he who studied the situation and brought about the restructuring of the treatment of cardiovascular diseases in the country. The proposals put forward by him on the early detection, prevention and treatment of cardiovascular diseases were approved at the Fifth Meeting of the ministers of health of the countries of the socialist community [15]. The implementation of his proposals has largely contributed to the reduction of mortality and morbidity due to these diseases. S.V. Kurashov

was one of the first pioneers who identified the need to combat cardiovascular diseases, starting from childhood and emphasized the importance of coordinated and joint effort by pediatricians, otolaryngologists, dentists and other specialists.

In 1962, at the All-Union Congress of Pediatricians, the proposals of S.V. Kurashov on the types of construction of all-children's institutions (polyclinics, hospitals, sanatoriums) were approved and implemented. The proposals of S.V. Kurashov on the construction of children's tuberculosis dispensaries were also implemented. The uncoupling of the therapeutic (territorial) and pediatric districts was completed, which was performed in accordance with the decree of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Council of Ministers of the USSR, "On measures of further improvement of public health." In the 75-year period, the policy of building medical and preventive institutions was changed, a significant number of large regional, city, central, district, children's and other hospitals were built in the country. The implementation of his program for the construction of specialized multidisciplinary medical institutions continues even today.

Following the traditions of his predecessors (N.A. Semashko and Z.P. Solovyova), S.V. Kurashov relied in his work (and taught to follow this) not only on the help of medical workers and health-care organizers, but also on assistance (supported by specific measures and funds) from state organizations, local counselors, party bodies and the entire public, primarily insurance assets and trade unions. He believed and even wrote that everything should be brought to the notice of the people and supported by them.

As a statesman and public figure, S.V. Kurashov received international fame and recognition. He was an excellent orator, an organizer par excellence of the Soviet health care system, and also an expert on the organization of health care abroad; he presented several papers at international symposia and assembly sessions of the World Health Organization (WHO). On May 08, 1962, he was elected President of the XV WHO World Assembly and laid the foundation stone for the WHO building in Geneva. In his speech at this assembly, S.V. Kurashov emphasized the importance of the humane role the WHO needed to play in solving not only major but also smaller issues faced in international health care, and in improving the health of the population of developing nations that had freed themselves from colonial oppression.

In 1958, at the suggestion of the USSR, a program was launched to eliminate natural smallpox. The Soviet Union provided developing countries

with over 1.5 billion doses of the vaccine; Soviet specialists took an active part in the implementation of the smallpox eradication program, as well as the development and implementation of national programs. Smallpox was eradicated all over the world in 1980. This was reported at the XXXIII session of the WHO Assembly in May 1980; a significant contribution to this work was made by S.V. Kurashov during his tenure as Minister of Health of the USSR.

The Soviet Union was one of the founding countries of the WHO, which was established on April 07, 1948. On the basis of Soviet research institutes, a large number of WHO scientific centers and laboratories were organized. On the initiative of the Soviet Union, WHO made an important decision on accessibility of medical care, education, and training of medical personnel.

S.V. Kurashov's last speech at the XXVIII Congress of Surgeons of the USSR on May 24, 1965 was marked by a keen desire to "bring Soviet health care to the forefront in the world," improve medical care for the population, and raise its cultural level [16].

Programs on the organization of health-resorts, outpatient, and polyclinic care through the introduction of the district principle, specialized inpatient, drug care, as well as the creation of major medical centers in rural areas developed under the guidance of S.V. Kurashov, played a leading role in improving the quality of medical care to the population. At present, many proposals developed by S.V. Kurashov, continue to enrich the theory and practice of health care in Russia.

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