

More attention to the observance of patients rights at the regional hospital of Gjirokastër

Introduction

1. In the context of its mission for the protection and observance of human rights, Albanian Helsinki Committee (AHC) monitored the observance of citizen rights at some of the primary health care institutions, psychiatric hospitals, orphanages and regional hospitals. One of the health facilities that were monitored was the regional hospital of Gjirokastër.
2. AHC has been and is monitoring other health facilities and has briefed and will keep on briefing the relevant institutions.
3. AHC assesses the understanding and the cooperation shown from the Ministry of Health and the Directorate of Social Insurance Institute for the problems presented on the part of AHC, their commitment to identify, tackle and propose measures to be taken for their solution.
4. AHC assesses the support to the Small Grants Program of the Commission for Democracy of the USA Embassy in Tirana for the initiative undertaken from AHC. The feedback, findings, conclusions and recommendations expressed above are AHC's and do not necessarily represent those of the State Department.

Some findings from the monitoring of the patients rights

5. The hospital in Gjirokastër is regionally-based and includes the district of Gjirokastra, Tepelena and Përmet. Its accommodation power is 180 beds. According to the data received from the hospital, the regional hospital has been under reconstruction since 2007, process which was expected to end up in the year 2010. Throughout this period the wards were all fused into one single storey with the aim not to hinder works.
6. Hospital facilities and the patients' rooms were in good conditions. The hygiene-sanitary situation appeared to be good with the exception of those parts that were under construction.
7. From the meetings held we were informed that some Japan medical apparatuses were donated to the hospital in 2005. But they are not still in operation due to the lack of knowledge on how to utilize them. Another identified problem was the lack of medical appliances in the pediatric pavilion of the hospital that according to the information obtained from the medical staff possesses only one ECG apparatus.
8. According to the information obtained from the hospital heads, there were no problems or lack of medicament supply. But from the meetings with the patients' relatives it was confirmed that there were cases they were obliged to purchase the medicines for their hospitalized relatives because the hospital did not provide them.

9. There was a low-level citizen awareness to seek the observance of legal rights and to complain against unfair actions. The hospitalized patients and their relatives did not express freely about their concerns that they have as regards the medical service provided. Moreover, the information and awareness level about medial structures for the protection of patients' rights was less than satisfactory. There was almost no knowledge about Doctor's Order. Patients' and medical staff legal rights and liabilities were posted nowhere at the hospital facilities.
10. The daily food quota for the patients was low. The food menu was poor, which made the patients provide their food from their family members. Also, there was no dietologist at this hospital to define the patients' diet in compliance with their diagnosis. The food was the same for all the diseased persons and there were no specific diets applied for the patients in compliance with their diagnosis.
11. From the information of the heads of the hospital in Gjirokastra it was deemed as necessary increasing medical staff due to the huge number of patients and to the fact that this was a regional hospital.

Recommendations

12. The quickest conclusion of the hospital reconstruction will be to the benefit of the patients for finest conditions in providing health care, but at the same time it would also help the medical staff.
13. AHC recommended to the relevant state bodies to start as quickly as possible the utilization of the medical appliances with the aim of increasing the quality of health care to the patients. Furthermore, it is necessary that the medical staff operating these appliances shall know well in advance the user's manual.
14. With the aim of a better respect for patients' rights and the avoidance of the possibilities for abuses and corruptive cases, AHC has recommended to the respective state bodies the need for a better reorganization of the work and of the hospital staff. Also, the same is true for the staff of the hospital emergency service.
15. It is recommendable to raise information and awareness level of the state structures for the protection of patients' rights and a better acquaintance of the Doctor's Order. Joint action is necessary to be undertaken from the relevant bodies, but also from the organizations operating in this field, human rights organizations and the citizens themselves.
16. It is necessary that the patients and medical staff legal rights and liabilities shall be posted somewhere at the hospital facilities.
17. It is recommendable to estimate the food quota and to undertake all the necessary measures to improve it.
18. Tackling the problem of the human resources and their increase would also be recommendable.

