

Thanatological problems in Polish classical medical sociology

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The phenomenon of death has always accompanied the humanity. Formerly, it was familiarised, interspersed in human life, natural and unquestionable. Currently, it is treated as 'taboo', controlled medically and pushed to the limits of capability, though inevitable. From socio-medical point of view death is a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing a range of social situations which accompany the process of dying. However, passing away itself is not the main interest for sociology but the gradual 'process of dying' with timeframe set by the diagnosis and death.

Purpose: To present the range and specificity of thanatological issues which have occurred in classical Polish sociology of medicine.

Material and methods: The study is theoretical and has been compiled on the basis of the selected

literature on the topic from the period between 1960 and 2013.

Results: The issues of death and dying have always been present in Polish sociology of medicine. It first appeared in western and Polish socio-medical literature in the seventies of the twentieth century. The main topics of social analysis refer to communication and interaction between the environment and the moribund as well as institutionalisation of death and dying, social attitudes towards death and all the problems that the close and relatives of a dying person struggle with.

Conclusion: The role of critical sociology is also worth mentioning because it challenges inadequacy of hospitals as bureaucratic institutions to situational requirements of the process of dying.

Key words: Medical sociology; death as social phenomenon; process of dying.
