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BASIC HEALTH SERVICE IN THE RURAL AREAS OF CHINA

by

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Mr. Chairman, fellow delegates,

Basic health work is a major issue relating to the service for the majority of the people. As a health worker from the basic level of the People's Republic of China, I am very delighted today to attend the present session and to discuss with you on this important issue. Herewith, with the hope to conduct exchange of experiences, I wish to present a brief introduction on the work we have done in developing the basic health work in the rural areas of our country.

Under the leadership of our great leader Chairman Mao Tsetung, the health service in New China has undergone a great and fundamental change comparing with that in the old China. It is particularly since the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, the Movement of criticising Lin Biao and Confucius, and the great struggle of criticising Teng Hsiao-ping and beating back the right deviationist attempt to reverse the correct verdicts, and with the masses' criticising thoroughly the revisionist health line and implementing resolutely the revolutionary health line of Chairman Mao, an excellent situation has prevailed in our rural areas, in which, the health revolution develops vigorously. Growing like spring sprouts, the barefoot doctors and cooperative medical service, two socialist new things which emerged during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution stride forward with full vitality. Our great leader Chairman Mao has given his warmest support to these two socialist new things. He personally read and ratified in 1968 two investigation reports of Jiangzhen People's Commune of Chuansha county of Shanghai on "The Orientation of the Revolution in Medical Education as seen in the Growth of Bare-foot Doctors", and of the Loyuan People's Commune of Changyang county in Hupei province on "A Cooperative Medical System Warmly Welcome by the Poor and Lower-Middle Peasants". Under the guidance of Chairman Mao's revolutionary line, these newly emerging things have registered a vigorous development. At present, more than 85% of the production brigades of the people's communes in our country have adopted the cooperative medical service system,

and barefoot doctors have grown in number to some 1.5 million strong. There are more than 3,900,000 health aids and midwives working at the production team level. Health departments at different levels are shifting the priority in allocation of manpower, material and financial resources to the rural areas. More than 110,000 person/visits in the countryside have been made by medical workers from the city and from the Army units in the form of mobile teams. Over 100,000 city medical workers have settled down in the countryside and more than 70% of medical and pharmacological college graduates have been assigned to work in rural areas. A medical and health network in the vast rural areas, suitable for use both at peace- and war-time, capable for both prevention and treatment, has initially taken shape, in which, there are general hospitals, epidemiological stations, maternal and child care stations at the level of the country, hospitals at that of the commune, cooperative medical stations of the production brigades, and health centres of the production teams.

The cooperative medical service is a great pioneering undertaking of the commune members to combat diseases with collective strength. It is beneficial to the improvement of people's health and the development of production; conducive to the restriction of bourgeois right and the reduction of the three differences between worker and peasant, between town and country and between manual labour and mental labour; and conducive to the strengthening of workers' and peasants' alliance and to the consolidation of the proletarian dictatorship. Part of the fund for running the cooperative medical service comes from accumulation by the commune members through self-reliance, part from public welfare funds and part from payments of a small amount by the commune members. With this system, the commune member does not need to pay for medical consultation except 3 - 5 cents for each registration. This system is much appreciated by the poor and lower-middle peasants.

Barefoot doctors are the mainstay in the rural health front. Coming from the poor and lower-middle peasants and going back to be at their service, the barefoot doctors link their hearts with that of the poor and lower-middle peasants. They take part in the collective agricultural productive labour and based on that they draw their income from the collective distribution system. Being a doctor and a peasant at the same time, they carry out preventive and therapeutic work for the commune member. The poor and lower-middle peasants name us affectionately as "barefoot doctors" who have "blisters in the palms, mud on the legs, medical kits over the shoulders and a close concern in their hearts for the poor and lower middle peasants".

Being firm and persistent, they fear neither hardship nor death; leaving aside personal safety and their family members and fighting in the fore front, they link their hearts closely with the poor and lower-middle peasants, heal the wounded and rescue the dying; treating and nursing the patients day and night, they give timely emergency care and treatment to the wounded. They have played a significant role in this great struggle.

Tachai brigade in Shansi province, an advanced red banner unit in the agricultural front of China, integrates its health work closely with agricultural production. By firmly implementing Chairman Mao's health line, no infectious disease has ever occurred there in the past decade and more. The fundamental experience of Tachai brigade in carrying out the health revolution is to take class struggle as the key link, persist on an all-round proletarian dictatorship over the bourgeoisie, over revisionism, capitalism and various old moded habitual influences. A mass movement in medical work of learning from Tachai is widely unfolding in our country. A growing number of health villages have thus emerged.

With the sturdy growing of barefoot doctors and the consolidation and development of the cooperative medical service system, work in the field of family planning, of the introduction of new methods for baby-delivery and of maternal and child health has been further promoted. At present, with the exception of the sparsely populated national minority areas, almost all couples at the child-bearing age have adopted family planning practice in the whole country. New delivery methods have been popularized. Institutions for maternal and child health care have been either established or perfected at the county, commune and brigade levels, which are staffed with full-time maternal and child health care personnel. There are special persons at all levels responsible for the care of women during the four periods (menstrual, pregnant, maternal and lactating) as well as for the protection of women and children's health.

Under the guidance of Chairman Mao's revolutionary line, the immense vitality of barefoot doctors and the cooperative medical service, the two newly emerging things, become more manifest. The past few years have witnessed a profound change in the health conditions of our rural areas. "Everywhere orioles sing, swallows dart" and "new scenes replacing the old". Under the leadership of the Party committees at various levels, the health conditions of our Loyuan People's Commune, Changyang county, Hubei province, have also taken on a new look.

Loyuan People's Commune is situated in the western part of Hubei province in a vast mountainous area more than one thousand meters above sea level. It is divided into 18

Different parts of the country adopt various forms that suit their own conditions for the training and further cultivation of barefoot doctors. Generally speaking, they can be classified into the following 4: namely 1, to be cultivated in the commune hospital, that is, to enlist, in a planned way, the barefoot doctors to the commune hospital for a certain period of time to study and work and raise their technical level through practice; 2, to be trained in the training course sponsored at the basic level by the rural medical teams organized and sent by the urban medical and health units, or to be trained through practice with the method of introducing technical know-how, helping to improve technical capability, or with the form of apprenticeship; 3, to be trained and further cultivated in the barefoot doctor school sponsored by the county; and 4, to be trained in the special training class set up by the medical and pharmacological colleges, paramedical schools as well as other types of schools. With these methods, training is given to barefoot doctors to raise their capability in preventing and treating diseases with the traditional Chinese medicine and western medicine.

Under the direct leadership of the production brigade and guided by the commune hospital, barefoot doctors, firmly carry through the principle of prevention first in their work. They mobilize the masses to unfold the Patriotic Health Campaigns centred on the wiping out of 4 pests and elimination of diseases, and work with vast efforts on the two controls (control water and human and animal feces) and five improvements (improve wells, latrines, stables, stoves and environments). They take up also, in an active manner, the work on anti-epidemic and hygiene, on health education; on family planning and maternal and child health care; on the adoption of comprehensive measures to prevent and treat commonly seen diseases; on the delivery of medical service and drugs to households; on the collection, cultivation, processing and utilization of Chinese herbal medicine; and on the technical guidance at the health aids at the production team level.

In the great struggle recently launched against the disaster of earthquake in our country, there have emerged many heroic deeds and touching scenes of the barefoot doctors illuminating the brilliance of the spirit of communism. Fighting in unity with the members of the medical teams from various parts of the country and the People's Liberation Army in rescuing the wounded, the barefoot doctors there have been praised by the broad masses as the "vanguard in the struggle against earthquake and for disaster relief".

female barefoot doctor(s) or health aid(s). The number of medical workers and medical units in the health network has doubled that before the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. In average, there is a medical worker for every 10 households and a medical unit for every 20 households. In addition to the prevention and treatment of those common and recurrent diseases, operations such as gastrectomy, and the perforation of intestines, appendicitis as well as family planning operations could be performed in our commune. Health aids in general are able to apply herbal medicine and other traditional drugs in preventing epidemics and treating common illnesses.

I am one of the barefoot doctors in the Loyuan Commune. Like other barefoot doctors in our country, we serve as doctors but never divorce from agricultural collective productive labour. We persist in doing both medical and agricultural farm work, taking the road of being red and expert and serving wholeheartedly the poor and lower-middle peasants.

The important task for our barefoot doctors is to implement conscientiously the principle of putting prevention first and to well-perform the preventive work. We mobilize the masses in carrying out mass patriotic health campaigns centred on the wiping out of 4 pests and the elimination of diseases, advance the work in "two controls" and "five improvements" and fulfil both in quality and quantity the vaccination work as arranged by the health department at the higher administrative level. We are also engaged in the work to fully utilize local herbal resources and actively carry out mass preventive medication against seasonal diseases and deliver medical service from household to household, thus effectively controlling the incidence of infectious diseases. At the same time, we conduct vast efforts in health education, popularizing scientific health knowledge and fostering a new custom of which "hygiene is regarded as an honour and unhygiene a disgrace", thereby helping the masses to nurture good hygienic habits and maintain a clean and tidy environment.

The establishment of the cooperative medical service and the emergence of barefoot doctors have provided the masses with the convenience for medical care and further ensured their health. Pan Chuang-min, a commune member of poor peasant origin, got osteomyelitis in the old society. After liberation he went from place to place for medical treatment. He had been to polyclinics and again admitted to hospitals. But instead of having his illness cured, he became paralyzed. Sharing the same expectation and worry of the poor and lower-middle peasants, the barefoot doctor took him to the medical station with a profound proletarian sentiment. After two months' meticulous care, he was cured of his sickness, able to stand up and take an active part in "grasping revolution and promoting production". Later, he became the leader of his production team. Take Grandma Fan, another patient of poor peasant origin for example. She got seriously ill in her sixties. Medical examination

production brigades and further divided into 153 production teams. It has a total population of more than 15 thousand, scattered in an area of over 70 kilometers long and over 30 kilometers wide. Mountains are huge and population thin. Before liberation, the poor and lower-middle peasants there, same as in other parts of China, suffered for generations from exorbitant taxation and rampant disease. They had led a miserable life of "having chaff and wild vegetables for half year's grain, but no medicine even for the dying". One year, an epidemic of small-pox took a high death toll of 13 among 66 people in 18 households of Chang Chia-wen. 21 people survived with defects. After liberation, with the brilliant leadership of Chairman Mao and the Communist Party of China, the poor and lower-middle peasants have freed themselves from usury by setting up a credit cooperative with collective strength, and from exploitation of the profiteers by setting up supplying and a marketing service and have shaken off the threat of impoverishment with the founding of agricultural cooperatives and people's communes. However, the problem of their having access to medical services still remained unsolved. For 17 years prior to the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, the old Ministry of Health had pushed the revisionist health line of Liu Shao-chi, of serving only a small number of urban overlords while neglecting the problems of childbirth, aging, sickness and death among the broad masses of the poor and lower-middle peasants. Although there were three poly-clinics run by the grouped practitioners and eight dispensaries in our area, nevertheless they did all the cheating and exploitation toward the poor and lower-middle peasants. They charged excessive expenses for consultation, sold out quack remedies or expensive drugs. At that time, we poor and lower-middle peasants had no power over health service and suffered greatly from the "Ministry of Health for Urban Overlords"

It is during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution have we in Loyuan were informed about Chairman Mao's directive that "in medical and health work, put the stress on the rural areas". Under the leadership of the commune's party committee, we established the cooperative medical service at the end of 1966, and seized back the power over medical and health work. Since then, the cooperative medical service of our commune has always been on the improvement, and the revolution in health work has been developing unceasingly into the depth. At present, our commune has a hospital, each production brigade a health station, each production team a dispensary of indigenous medicine. There are in the commune, altogether 177 medical units staffed with 405 medical workers, among which, 40 in the commune hospital, 59 barefoot doctors in the brigades and 306 health aids in the production teams with a total number of 40 beds at the commune and the brigade level. Each brigade or team has

showed her illness being intestinal obstruction. In the past, cases like this occurring in our mountainous area would have to be sent to the county hospital. But with the barefoot doctor and the cooperative medical service, patients can be treated locally.

According to the general situation of the patient, I decided to apply a single-drug prescription ~~and~~ traditional medicine. For the safety of the patient, I personally took the drug for testing before applying it. I found it having the effect of removing obstruction and facilitating bowel movements and without side effect. Thus, Grandma Fan's sickness was cured. With tears in her eyes and in her excitement, Grandma Fan shouted again and again "Long live Chairman Mao!". We have also conducted mass survey and treatment for eight times against endemic, common and recurrent diseases. More than 1,500 patients with endemic, difficult and rare diseases have been cured and regained their health. Witnessing the healthy development of us barefoot doctors under the guidance of Chairman Mao's revolutionary line, the poor and lower-middle peasants warmly praise us as the "bosom ones of the poor and lower-middle peasants".

In running the cooperative medical service, we have promoted the mass movement for the collection, cultivation, processing and utilization of medicinal herbs with the spirit of self-reliance, thereby accumulating funds for the cooperative medical service and developing rural medical and health work. We collect more than 10,000 catties of medicinal herbs every year. For the cultivation of medicinal plants, the commune, the production brigade and the production team each has their own plots reaching the total of 265 mu.

In order to meet the needs of the development of medical and health services, our commune has recently set up our own medical college - the May 7th Medical College - for the training of barefoot doctors. Guided by Chairman Mao's instructions concerning the revolution in education and health work, our May 7th Medical College is making continuously new contributions to the socialist health services in the rural areas and to the daily strengthening of the proletarian dictatorship.

Party committees at various levels are much concerned about the healthy growing of us barefoot doctors. Should we make some progress, we would be accorded great honour. For example, I have not done much work, but have been highly honoured by the Party and the people. I was sent to Peking for National Day celebrations in 1969, and happily received by Chairman Mao, the great leader of the Chinese people. In January 1975, I attended the Fourth National People's Congress. I have also taken up the posts of vice-chairmen of the commune's and the county's revolutionary committees. I decided not to be self-conceited in front of honour. Though my social position

has



has changed, the true characteristic of a barefoot doctor shall not change. I am determined to be a barefoot doctor for the rest of my life, and to maintain a close tie with the poor and lower-middle peasants whom I serve for the rest of my life.

Mr. Chairman, fellow delegates,

China is a developing socialist country belonging to the third world. We have made some progress in our health work, yet there remains much to be done in the future. At present, our medical and health workers, like the people in the whole country, are earnestly studying Chairman Mao's series of important instructions, thoroughly criticizing Teng Hsiao-ping's counter-revolutionary revisionist line and firmly carrying the great struggle to beat back the right deviationist attempt of reversing correct verdicts through to the end. This great struggle is giving impetus to the rapid development and further deepening of the health revolution, further changing the health situation in our rural areas as well as in the factories and mines and in the cities, and is making health work develop along our own path and serve better the socialist revolution and construction. Meanwhile, we are also willing, together with the people of other countries, to make our contributions to the common development of the people's medical and health services.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.