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Review: M. Prusak, *Bioetyka dla farmaceuty* (Bioethics for Pharmacist), Bernardinum, Pelplin 2018, pp. 165

People involved in the preparation of medicines have always been subject to high requirements regarding professional qualifications and moral attitudes. It is not without reason that a certain stereotype of a pharmacist as a model of honesty and diligence has been formed. Pharmacists themselves also express concern for the decent name of their profession in the content of formulated pharmacy vows and the principles contained in deontological codes, among which, care for the good of patients comes first. Undoubtedly, the mission and calling of a pharmacist are consistent with the ethos of medical professions focused on protecting a patient's health and life. Simultaneously, the role of a pharmacist is not limited to issuing medicines – pharmacists can and should even play an educational role towards patients and whole society. In addition, Catholic pharmacists are encouraged to witness faith and uphold Gospel values.

A pharmacist working in a pharmacy is, by his/her profession, an intermediary between a doctor and a patient. This relationship requires extraordinary delicacy and respect from both sides. A pharmacist, like other health care professionals, must meet high expectations and obligations of society, which were expressed in regulations and laws relating to the medical professions. Ultimately, however, he/she is an independent moral subject, responsible in a specific situation, also professional, for learning the truth about the good and realizing it in his/her life. Occasionally, a conflict may occur between requirements of a pharmacist's conscience and expectations of a patient, doctor or society.

Ethical aspects of a pharmacist's profession are presented in the book by Małgorzata Prusak *Bioetyka dla farmaceuty* (Bioethics for Pharmacist). The author is a Doctor of Theology on moral theology and a Master of Pharmacy. She worked for several years in pharmaceutical industry, and currently is a head

of a pharmacy and at the same time the President of the Association of Polish Catholic Pharmacists. Therefore, it was not difficult for Małgorzata Prusak to identify and collect in the book numerous questions about professional ethics. Answers may not always be unambiguous, but the author pays significant attention to all issues, not only using her experience and thoughts but also knowledge gained in academic work in the field of moral theology.

The book comprised of seven chapters. It is significant that the very first pages of the first one chapter contain imperative words about the calling of a pharmacist. It is a calling to serve people in the field of health, care for it, prevention and help. Then the author emphatically emphasizes that the pharmacist is a “servant of life.” Working in a pharmacy, laboratory or pharmaceutical industry, he/she should protect everyone’s life from conception to natural death, especially those affected by suffering and illness. According to M. Prusak, the Pharmacist’s Code of Ethics constitutes a significant signpost for a pharmacist. Pharmacists should be conscious what is important, desirable, good, moral and right in their profession, and what is reprehensible. The principles contained in the Code de facto do not guard a pharmacist’s morality, but are a reflection on how he/she should work to best serve a patient and not be susceptible to the danger of following his/her own (or other) interests instead of the good of a patient.

The second chapter of the work is entirely devoted to the issue of the beginning of human life. The author answers the question, when does human life begin, what are the effects of the confusion about the definition of the beginning of life and what is pregnancy. She also discusses activities leading to termination of pregnancy, especially the use of the intrauterine device. The issue of the effects of so-called tablets after and pharmacological abortion is also presented. In the publication, the author also addresses an ethical evaluation of the use of cell lines obtained from aborted human fetuses and artificial insemination.

M. Prusak also presents issues related to the natural end of human life, which is death. Man should be guaranteed a dignified death. Medical personnel should consider patient’s spiritual needs, demonstrate him assistance and support in overcoming emerging difficulties and accompany him in growing to his death. No wonder the author negatively evaluates participation of medical staff and pharmacists in the so-called assisted suicide. The involvement of pharmacists in euthanasia is closely related to this issue. The third chapter ends with a reflection on a role of a pharmacist in palliative care.

Practicing the profession of a pharmacist includes the provision of pharmaceutical care consisting of a documented process in which a pharmacist,

working with a patient and a doctor, and if necessary with representatives of other medical professions, monitors the proper course of pharmacotherapy. An important element of a pharmacist's cooperation with a patient – as emphasized in the following chapter of the book by the author – is monitoring of taking medicines and compliance with medical recommendations, as well as education in the field of lifestyle modification in selected clinical entities. As a part of health education, a pharmacist can give instructions on how to use medical devices such as inhalers, insulin pens and glucometers. M. Prusak also assesses the issue of drug abuse by patients. Therefore, she answers the question: what is the role of a pharmacist in reducing the risks associated with it? She also devotes a lot of attention to counterfeiting medicines.

The fifth chapter of the reviewed book is significantly thought-provoking, dedicated to the role of a pharmacist in relation to addiction problems. The chapter starts with a definition of addiction. M. Prusak presents various forms of addiction faced by pharmacists and describes how they should be responded to. The author introduces a reader to the issue of legalizing drugs. And here comes the next question: how to assess issuing drugs to addicts and how to reduce drug dependency? The author also addresses problems of non-medical use of medicines.

Chapter six is entitled *Farmaceuta wobec medycyny alternatywnej* (Pharmacist and Alternative Medicine). M. Prusak first discusses the issue of medications of unproven efficacy, including homeopathic products. She presents the position of the medical community and pharmacists on homeopathy. She also considers the relationship between homeopathy and magic; raises the question: whether its use may pose a spiritual threat to a patient? Dietary supplements are another issue related to the use of medicines. The author argues that frequent thinking “certainly will not hurt” can be deceptive. Using too many supplements at the same time can adversely affect the medications taken or lead to overdose. Concurrently, she warns against false supplements that may appear, e.g. when buying online or in a bazaar.

The conflict that occurs when a pharmacist is obliged to sell medicaments, the use of which is immoral, according to his/her conscience, seems to be particularly difficult to resolve. It is therefore no surprise that the author in chapter seven discusses a pharmacist's right to the conscience clause. In this connection, she first introduces a reader to the concept of conscientious objection. It is a non-aggressive, individual action of a pharmacist, consisting in refusing to perform a specific professional obligation imposed by law, undertaken due to requirements of conscience, both ethical and religious. The notion of “conscientious objection” is associated with the functioning concept of “conscience

clause,” which is often treated as synonymous, although there is a difference between them. The conscientious objection is more related to the moral dimension, and the conscience clause – to the legal area. Małgorzata Prusak attempts to answer currently bothering questions: can a patient, referring to the conscience clause, be sent to another pharmacist or pharmacy?; what is the difference in the responsibility of an employee and pharmacy manager refusing to sell a condom compared to the situation of a seller at a gas station, supermarket, kiosk or store?; does the conscientious objection concern a pharmacist working in industry? In the current legal order, the pharmacist’s freedom of conscience is not limited by an act, thus he/she can take advantage of it if it does not endanger a patient’s life. The difficulties of pharmacists in exercising the freedom of conscience – argues the author of the reviewed book – do not result from the lack of legal regulations, but from social pressures trying to limit the freedom of a pharmacist, including those from circles that do not lean towards discovering the truth about the effectiveness and consequences of morally questioned medicaments.

It is to be congratulated on the achieved effect of the publication, which – in a fascinating and transparent way, with elegant graphic and editorial design – touches the most significant and cardinal issues that a pharmacist as a person remaining in the service of his/her neighbour and pharmacy as a science must face in contemporary reality.

The book under review should be a must-read for both pharmacists who search for answers to bothering questions and for those who believe that there is no room for ethical questions in medical professions. This is a valuable and extremely needed publication, which responds to expectations of employees of the broadly understood pharmacy, but is not limited to this group. Reading the content of the book can be beneficial for medical students, representatives of medical professions and specializations, as well as patients or pharmacy clients themselves.