What is saving of human life worth in Poland?

M H Madalinski

The problem of doctors being underpaid appears not only in Poland but also in some EC countries, such as France and Germany. The meaning of the problem there is, however, slightly different. French and German doctors become discouraged but they do not have to confront such moral dilemmas doctors from Eastern European countries. Doctors from Western Europe can afford to pay for specialist courses or medical conferences. For Polish doctors, who are paid very much less, sometimes even paying for medical books or journals may be a problem. The consequence is that a doctor who earns very little may become easy prey for pharmaceutical companies and may well find it more difficult to reject their invitation to cooperate with them.

Nobody is interested in the fact, says Dr Konstancy Radziwilv, the President of the Supreme Medical Council, in Gazeta Wyborcza,1 that there are a lot of enthusiasts among Polish doctors, who conduct scientific research without obtaining any of the financial benefits that would be associated with such research in Western countries. According to the latest instructions from the national internal diseases specialist, which specify the requirements for tutors of internal diseases specialisations, there is no difference in standing between publishing in a Polish and a foreign journal. The same number of points is granted for an article published in a Polish medical journal as for one published in the best foreign periodical.

A lot should be changed in the organisation of Polish medical care. This is not, however, evident to those involved in the politics of medical care. Not many people realise how little doctors in postcommunist countries earn, and that such low incomes could lead to general corruption and the breaking of the code of ethics in any country, anywhere in the world.

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