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Historical Overview of Volunteer Practices in the Health Care System in the 1920s–70s:
Materials from the State Archive of the Russian Federation and the Central State Archive of
Moscow

Abstract

Turning to archival materials continues the Russian archivists' tradition, developed in the recent decades, to introduce into scientific use documents of key importance for understanding the

Soviet history and its episodes, including those related to socially significant activities of voluntary activists in the field of healthcare under the auspices of the Union of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR. The chronological frameworks of the undertaken research is 1920–70s. The author aims to review documentary sources that reflect the activities of the Society's activists acting on voluntary and gratuitous basis. The work actualizes the problem of evolution of the sectorial sphere of volunteer labor application from historical point of view. In its activities during the studied period, the Society used traditional organizational forms and sought out new ones for social mobilization of the population's participation in gratuitous donor movement and its promotion, sanitary improvement of cities and villages, improvement and popularization of sanitary culture at work and home, public sanitary control, preventive measures and combating the spread of infectious diseases, etc. The empirical base of the study is formed by materials from the State Archive of the Russian Federation and the Central State Archive of Moscow. The body of sources on the subject analyzed by the author is distinguished by its diversity (minutes of meetings of the executive committee plenums, operational meetings, transcripts, certificates, annual reports on core activities, etc.); it permits to highlight the diverse activities, forms and methods of the Society's activists' work, as well as to trace the process of institutionalization of the profile direction in the national volunteer movement in the field of healthcare. The author has introduced unique archival documents into scientific use. The methodological basis of the work is principle of historicism, systematic nature of scientific analysis, objectivity, integrated use of a wide range of sources, which has made it possible to consider the volunteer practices of socially significant activity in the healthcare system in the process of its formation and development, in the context of historical conditionality and continuity of its development. The article takes on particular importance in connection with systematic development and popularization of medical volunteering in modern Russia, which takes into account the rich historical experience and heritage of the USSR.

Keywords

Archival document, historical sources, Union of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR, volunteerism, healthcare.

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