

Central Directive on Strengthening Health, Epidemic Prevention, and Medical Work (September 9, 1951)

To all Central Bureaus, and forward to Branch Bureaus, Party Committees at the Provincial, Municipal, and District Levels, County Committees, and County Party Committees:

Comrade He Cheng's report [1] is excellent. Upon receiving it, you may publish it in internal party publications to draw the attention of leaders at all levels. The Central Committee believes that the lack of attention from Party committees at all levels to health, epidemic prevention, and general medical work is a major shortcoming in the Party's work that must be corrected. In the future, health, epidemic prevention, and general medical work must be regarded as significant political tasks, and efforts must be made to develop this work vigorously. Guidance and assistance must be provided to health workers, and health work must be inspected promptly. In terms of funding, apart from what is allocated in the central budget, efforts should be made to raise funds locally as much as possible. Cadres must be educated to understand that, given the current situation, the loss of manpower, livestock, and economic losses due to diseases and deaths caused by the lack of health knowledge and health work among the people nationwide may exceed the losses suffered by the people due to various natural disasters such as droughts, floods, and pests each year. Therefore, health work should be treated at least as equally important as disaster relief and prevention work, and should not be underestimated.

Chinese Communist Party Central Committee

September 9, 1951

Note:

[1] Refers to the report by He Cheng, Party Secretary and Deputy Minister of Health of the Central People's Government, on national epidemic prevention work submitted to the CPC Central Committee on September 7, 1951. The report summarized the achievements of health work since the founding of the People's Republic of China based on the principles of "serving workers, peasants, and soldiers; giving priority to prevention; and uniting traditional Chinese and Western medicine," as well as the shortcomings still present in the work. It emphasized that in order to achieve the desired results in epidemic prevention work, leaders at all levels of the Party and government must pay appropriate attention. However, many cadres at the provincial and county levels only consider it the government's responsibility to prevent starvation deaths, while not paying enough attention to deaths due to unhygienic conditions, considering them unavoidable "natural disasters." In fact, the number of deaths due to epidemics far exceeds those due to starvation, and most of them are preventable.