

# The Summer Health Campaign in Xi'an City in 1944

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**Abstract**—In 1944, Xi'an government held the summer health campaign, which included epidemic prevention injection, well water disinfection, toilet disinfection, cleaning and so on. To some extent, the campaign improved people's living environment and promoted the construction of local public health. Although restricted by the objective conditions at that time, the effect of the campaign itself was greatly limited, and it was not difficult to see that the government hoped to use the platform of summer health campaign to instill health knowledge in the public and cultivate their personal and public health habits. The significance of urban modernization contained in the campaign is worthy of recognition.

**Keywords**—in 1944; Xi'an city; summer health campaign; public health

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the early 20th century, with the spread of modern western public health concept in China, the modern health and epidemic prevention system was gradually established in China. One of its obvious manifestations was the mass health campaign which emerged and gradually developed during the Republic of China. Based on the archives of Shaanxi province, this paper attempts to make a preliminary discussion on the health campaign of Xi'an city in 1944, hoping to provide some references for the public health publicity activities at present.

## II. BACKGROUND OF THE SUMMER HEALTH CAMPAIGN

In the 1920s and 1930s, people at that time had a considerable understanding of the causes and significance of mass health campaigns: first, to launch the health campaigns were used to arouse public to believe the science and pay attention to personal and public health. As the Ministry of Health pointed out in "Publicity outline of health campaign congress" issued in May, 1929: we are easy to catch diseases due to our lack of hygiene, we are often confused with superstition after diseases, and refuse to seek medical treatment, leading to death, so it is necessary to speak up to promote the awakening of Chinese. Some health experts believe that "if citizens do not have personal common sense, they will act against the principles of health and commit suicide, and the health authorities will not be able to take care of them" [1]; second, recognized that health campaigns were aimed at preventing infectious diseases and protecting collective lives, that is to say "Paying attention to health not only can increase their own resistance to the virus, but also can enhance public happiness and protect the safety of the

collective" [2]. In addition, they would not understand the purpose of health administration if citizens did not have public health knowledge. When individual freedom was obstructed, it was bound to destroy and obstruct [1]; third, promoted the health campaign to the height of patriotism and love of the nation, that was to say, "focusing on hygiene can reduce death, so the health campaign is the kind of movement saving race and nation" [2].

It can be seen that public opinion at that time formed a common view on the current situation of China's health service: the health knowledge of Chinese citizen was extremely lacking and their health habits were poor. In order to promote and achieve effective health construction, it was necessary to carry out public health education. From the 1920s to the 1940s, under the promotion and guidance of the national government, mass health campaigns were carried out at different degrees in all regions in order to popularize health knowledge and enhance the quality of the people. Such campaigns first appeared in big cities, such as Shanghai. From the summer of 1922, the public health movement was held every year. In Xi'an, a city in northwest China with backward economic development, there was no public health service. However, with the rise of the Anti-Japanese War, the national government took Xi'an as the secondary capital for construction. As one of the six municipalities directly under the central government, in addition to building roads and bridges, urban planning, water conservancy construction and other work, public health was also an indispensable part of urban modernization in the planning and construction of the national government. Xi'an thus began to transform into a modern city.

In order to guide the public health movement, the Nanjing national government issued a variety of rules and measures. Such as "Publicity outline of health campaign congress" (May, 1928), "Summer health campaign implementation measures" (May, 1941), etc. Among them, "The implementation plan of the summer health campaign" required local party and government organs to organize the summer health campaign committee together with local organizations and medical practitioners. A certain time is selected from May 1st to Aug.4th according to the climate to hold the summer health campaign. [3] From then on, mass health campaigns had been fixed in the form of laws and regulations.

## III. LAUNCH SUMMER HEALTH CAMPAIGN IN XI'AN

Under the promotion and guidance of the Nanjing national government, from May to August in 1944, the Xi'an

government organized the summer health campaign committee (later referred to as Summer health committee) in conjunction with various organs, units and medical practitioners, etc., and held the summer health movement, which mainly included the following aspects:

#### A. Epidemic Prevention Injection

During the period of the Republic of China, infectious diseases frequently spread and brought harm to the society. It was an extremely important measure to prevent the epidemic of infectious diseases in the population by improving the immune level of the population and reducing the susceptibility of the population through preventive inoculation [5]. It was an important aspect of summer health work was vaccination. Summer health committee set up six fixed vaccination stations in the Bell tower, the Central main gate (now Liberation gate) and the four main gates to provide free vaccination for passers-by. The staff of each injection station, in addition to the leaders assigned by the health office, should be rotated by the public and private hospitals. But most people "were reluctant to try the vaccine due to lack of knowledge, and it was only marginally effective after much persuasion" [4]. The committee had to change its approach to enhance the efficiency of vaccination. Medical school students were invited to assist the health office to form an itinerant injection team consisting of eight teams, which were sent to various organs, schools, public places and stores to give free injections to the public. "The effect was very great" [4]. In addition, the committee also entrusted 20 public and private hospitals and clinics in the city to provide free vaccines for citizens.

The summer health committee "injected 86,521 people for a total of 71 days from June 21 to August 31' through the above three methods" [4]. The implementation of epidemic prevention injection had promoted the knowledge of prevention to the public, and enhanced the immunity of the residents of the city to infectious diseases to a certain extent, so as to help preventing and controlling the occurrence and prevalence of infectious diseases.

#### B. Disinfection of Well Water

Water is the source of human life, and it will become the enemy of human health if water is polluted. For Xi'an well water disinfection, the summer health committee divided them into public wells and office units' wells. For public well water, "the committee shall purchase disinfectant and various equipment, and the health office shall measure the well depth and water amount one by one, and then dispatch staff to disinfect the well day by day" [4]; For the office units water well, they should apply for registration separately for disinfection. In order to strengthen the well water disinfection work, the committee asked the health office to supervise the guidance, the well owner or Baojia personnel stamped on its worksheet each time, and made the table of disinfection times in the obvious place near the well. They should fill in the number and date on the form for examination. At the end of the summer health campaign, "the twenty-three public wells in this city were disinfected, with a total of 2,074 times from June 26 to the end of August" [4]. The self-used wells of office units and news agency in this city "seventeen were disinfected,

with a total of 868 times" [4]. Altogether, 40 wells were disinfected 2,942 times, which greatly improved the public drinking water environment.

#### C. Disinfection of the Toilet

Toilets are places where feces are stored, where germs and flies grow, and whether they are clean or not involves not only personal hygiene but also public health. In 1943, Chiang kai-shek said in a warrant, "hygiene and cleanliness must be promoted first in order to improve society in all provinces, and hygiene must be promoted first in toilets, which is very important and should not be considered trivial" [6]. This shows that the toilet is closely connected with hygiene and cleanliness, and is also an important aspect of social custom improvement.

The summer health committee also recognized that "toilets are the source of infectious diseases, especially in summer" [4], and divided toilet disinfection into public toilets and office units toilets. For public toilets, "there are thirty-two public toilets in this city, the committee will buy and distribute the lime to cleaning team of the police department, which will assign staff to disinfect the toilet one by one every day" [4]; for the office units toilets, approved by the joint meeting of leaders of summer health committee, sent letters to office units and news agencies etc. and asked them to register the number of toilets, then distributed the lime to them for disinfecting by themselves. "Each unit will be given 100kg lime, and there are 32 units getting the lime from the committee" [4]. From June 28 to the end of August, "2,112 times disinfection had been carried out by the summer health committee" [4]. In addition, for the families of citizens, the summer health committee stated that "it is not possible to eliminate them one by one. In addition to stepping up the publicity work, the committee will conduct weekly inspection, correct and guide them at any time to improve the situation" [4].

In these sports, the summer health committee passed on the knowledge of public health to the citizens, hoping to develop their modern health concepts and habits, and finally everyone could have a healthy body and become as a strong citizen.

### IV. CHARACTERISTICS AND ENLIGHTENMENT OF SUMMER HEALTH CAMPAIGN

The summer health campaign of 1944 was a mass health campaign led by the government and participated by various sectors of the society<sup>1</sup>. It has the following features:

First, it is necessary to pay much attention to publicity. The summer health committee thought: "Publicity is education", the purpose of the committee's work was not only to "finish the summer health work of Xi'an with the efforts of the committee, but also to advocate the habit of paying attention to health among 500,000 people in the whole city" [4]. During the four months of the summer health campaign, publicity was often

<sup>1</sup> There are many participating units, they are Shaanxi province government, Communist party in Shaanxi, Shaanxi provincial health department, Shaanxi provincial health office, Youth league in Shaanxi branch, Communist party department in Xijing city, Xi 'an garrison command, Central cadre training corps, Provincial hospitals, Affiliated hospital of medical college, Xi 'an Red Cross hospital, Joint offices of the big four Banks, Banking association of Xijing city, Commerce chamber of Xijing city.

carried out. Firstly, set up the publicity week. The committee "first of all, designates from June 2 to June 9 as the publicity week at the beginning of its work, focuses on expanding publicity, so that all citizens will know about summer health and be alert" [4]. The specific measures were as follows: "16,000 copies of colorful summer health posters will be printed and distributed by special personnel assigned by this committee to various theatres, restaurants, hotels, barber shops and other public places in the city, and their meanings will be explained at any time. Murals of epidemic disease are printed and distributed to the public in the city and post along the streets. 10,000 Yuan is given to the civic education center to make the large colored cloth paintings to hang on the bell tower and at important street corners for publicity purposes. 60,000 Yuan is given to the health department, half amount of it is used to print colorful hanging pictures, and the rest is used to print small text publicity materials" [4]. Secondly, the publicity is strengthened via all kinds of ways. For example, "firstly, letters will be sent to famous persons from the medical and social circles of this city for inviting them to deliver a speech on Xi 'an radio at 12:20 p.m. every day; secondly, letters will be sent to the medical professionals and social dignitaries for inviting them to write the straightway theses for being published on every newspapers; thirdly, letters will be sent to all office units and schools to make the summer health slogan and put it on the main thoroughfare; fourthly, making paper, hanging pictures and posters, then putting up in shops and public places for publicity; fifthly, 5,000 leaflets on the prevention of cholera will be printed and distributed to people all over the city in order to arouse people's attention to the spread of cholera; sixthly, showing slides in the cinema" [4]. Finally, propaganda is carried out in the concrete work at ordinary times. For example, "explain orally the significance of summer health at any time" when performing work in each epidemic prevention injection station, injection team and well water disinfection team.

Second, it is necessary to pay much attention to the supervision and reward work. In order to keep abreast of the progress of various work of it and the sanitary conditions in various parts of the city, the summer health committee, "supervised and inspected the work efficiency and eliminated abuses" [4], organized inspection teams, which were composed of personnel from the police command, municipal police department, military police corps, new games, health department, health office and municipal chamber of commerce. The inspection, starting from 9am with the gathering place at the Xinyunhui, will be held once a week. Set out by the group leader, they assessed the work of each group of this committee on one hand, and understood the public health situation on the other hand. A record form was provided for each inspection.

If the inspection team finds any shops, snack shops, restaurants, barbershops and hotels that did not comply with the summer health regulations, they could propose at any time and asked them to improve immediately. For the city's public places and small vendors such as fruit and vegetables, who did not accord with hygiene should be banned immediately and given detailed explanation, hoping that they can understand. If the health of each firm didn't achieve the standard, it is required to give a deadline for improvement review. If there

was still no improvement, punishment would be given according to health regulations [7].

Summer health committee would inspect the objects and carry out the measures that "the hard-working unit will be awarded the medal, and for the most hard-working unit, the committee will report to the central government for a central award" [4]. In 1944, the cleanest shops awarded by the summer health committee according to the records in the previous inspection forms were: Huierkang, Lvji Tiansheng Garden, International Restaurant, Quanxinjia Sauce Garden, etc. [4]. Summer health committee would make wood Cleaning Cards to these companies to encourage them to continue maintaining good health.

With the promotion and guidance of the Nanjing national government and the assistance of people from all walks of life, all the work of the summer health committee was gradually implemented in accordance with the plan throughout the campaign, which played a certain role in improving people's living environment and promoting the construction of local public health. People should realize that the construction of public health during the Republic of China was a manifestation of modern civilization in the evolution of the relationship between the state and society since modern times, and was also an important part of China's modernization process. But the movement itself had many drawbacks that hindered its effectiveness. Firstly, it lacks manpower and material resources. The staffs of the committee were all from all kinds of office units, they all had their own work in addition to the work of this committee. The result was that "no one can fully engage in the work of the committee", which made the business of the committee in invisible damage; Secondly, it lacks money. The campaign did not earmark money and its recruitment was minimal, "the members of this committee can't perfect their work with this little money." [4], therefore, difficulties in work were inevitable.

## V. CONCLUSION

During the period of the Republic of China, the society was in a period of social transformation, and the whole society was in turmoil. The central government had limited administrative resources and capacity, and the social and economic development was slow, which made public health services lack strong administrative and material support. For the government, it hoped to use the platform of summer health campaign to instill health knowledge in the public, cultivate people's personal health habits and public health habits, improve the living environment and health, and let the public participate in the construction of public health and the prevention of infectious diseases. However, in order to achieve this goal, "it can't be successful if people only depend on the government or holding a campaign with their five minutes of enthusiasm. It shall depend on the strong cooperation and their continuous efforts between the local health administrative departments and the people, and all comply with the law of health, always pay attention to the method of health so as to form the habit of health, only then the diseases can be reduced and the health can be improved, and finally shake off the stigma of the sick man of Asia" [8]. Although the public health construction in the Republic of China period improved people's living

conditions to a certain extent, this kind of social transformation was not thorough. Therefore, the construction of modern public health needs not only the improvement of the level of health technology, but also the improvement of comprehensive national strength and the construction of political civilization.

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