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Unhealthy **HEALTHCARE** system



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№ 408

JARGALSAIKHAN Dambadarjaa

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Unhealthy **HEALTHCARE** system



Our society needs to have an informed discussion on which parts of our healthcare system are corrupt, in what layers, and why. For this purpose, the DeFacto Institute organized its TV debate on 1 December. The debate was kicked off with a presentation of results from an independent survey 'Corruption situation in the public health sector of Mongolia' commissioned by the Asia Foundation in 2014.

The survey covered 18 hospitals in Ulaanbaatar, 200 doctors and nurses who worked there for no less than one year, and 200 clients who have received their healthcare services for no less than two weeks. Fifty-five per cent of all clients said that they gave money and gifts in some form to doctors and nurses. It was either the clients (23 per cent) themselves or their families (32 per cent) who provided the gifts.

The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare had agreed to have their specialists take part in the TV debate. However, they bailed out at the last minute, just before the debate began. This is a clear example of how the authorities, government, and its

employees neglect their duty to provide information to the public. Given our governments nowadays last a year and a half, we are seeing more incapable, bureaucratic people who cannot do their job well and always try to avoid accountability.

Nevertheless, other participants – O. Batbayar, Executive Director of Transparency International Mongolia, and J. Amarsanaa, Advisor to the President and Doctor of Medicine – were respectful of their commitments and had an active participation in the debate. Due to the sudden absence of government representatives, the three of us had a discussion rather than a debate, which is summarized below.

Funding in **HEALTHCARE**

When increasing the allocated spending for healthcare, we need to improve its effectiveness, mechanism for oversight, and expand the role of civil society. Otherwise, the money will just leak away without any substantial impact.



Anomaly in **MEDICATIONS AND TREATMENT**

Ulaanbaatar currently has pharmacies everywhere. These pharmacies do not ask for prescriptions when providing pills and medications, which has resulted in people consuming medicine like food.

One third of all medications and medical equipment in Mongolia is counterfeit. A WHO study reveals that nearly 30 per cent of all medications sold in our country are unregistered and low-quality. Mongolia has now become one of the countries with the most inappropriate use of medicines.

As of October this year, the government has spent 26.3 billion MNT to subsidize medications sold at pharmacies. Fifteen per cent of the health insurance fund went into these subsidies. The WHO has also reported that Mongolia is one of the ten countries that charge the highest prices for medications.

People pay for health insurance on a regular basis through their employer. An average of 50,000 MNT is

also paid when receiving healthcare services. On top of that, you will need to give a gift to doctors and nurses. Mongolians are struggling financially when they become ill because medications are too expensive and of low quality.

The Asia Foundation study on health sector corruption has revealed that doctors, nurses, and other hospital employees do commit bribery, but the underlying cause is that they are underpaid when there is low availability of healthcare services.

Mongolia has the infrastructure to provide healthcare services to everyone. Having a three-layered public hospital system and private hospitals is advantageous when it comes to healthcare. Although the growing number of private institutions helps alleviate pressure on public hospitals, we need to improve the oversight on healthcare spending that is coming from the health insurance fund, and enhance the role of civil society. This involvement from civil society is absolutely called for, given the health insurance fund is now moving to the Ministry of Health, which basically means the service provider is going to be paying itself.

Public **OVERSIGHT**

Public oversight is something that we must do for the sake of our own health, but we are not doing it well today. If people do not monitor how the money they pay for health insurance is being spent and ensure complete transparency of information, we will not be able to solve any problem in the health sector.

If the government opens an easy-to-access online platform to let everyone know where their money is going, it will be an important step to improve the public oversight mechanism.

Introducing private institutions into the public healthcare services and insurance would allow for improved public oversight on how the funds are being spent. Also, making that information available on public media would enhance the efficiency of our healthcare system.

2017.12.06





RAPHAËL GRUMAN

Dietitian – Nutritionist CEO
of Diet at Work agency

DeFacto **INTERVIEW**

For bilingual interviews, visit <http://jargaldefacto.com/category/8>

IDEALLY, YOU SHOULD FINISH YOUR DINNER BY 8PM SO AS TO ALLOW A FEW HOURS FOR DIGESTION **BEFORE YOU SLEEP**

Dr. Raphaël Gruman is a writer and nutritionist. He is the author of the diet book "La Méthode Gruman" (The Gruman Method). He is also founder and director of the DIET AT WORK agency, a network of dietitians throughout France.

Defacto: Please tell us about this Diet at Work agency.

RG: In France, I started a company to explain to people how to diet and create a healthier menu for a healthier lifestyle.

Defacto: Every nation has its own particular food. How can Mongolians have a nutritious, balanced meal?

RG: In fact, the body needs different nutrients. If you cannot find these in your current diet, you can experience nutritional problems, such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease. If we try to balance our diet as well as possible, we can help to avoid these types of problems.

Defacto: Let's talk about diabetes, which is unfortunately a relatively new disease for Mongolian society. Where does it come from? Lifestyle, food choice?

RG: It is new for Mongolia because the Mongolian diet has started to change. For example, Mongolians are eating more wheat which means an increase in sugar. This increases the level of blood sugar in the body.

Defacto: OK, when we talk about diabetes, Mongolians know it comes from sugar—we even call it the "sugar disease"—but how is bread the problem? How does that work?

RG: In fact, this type of food—bread, pasta—is not sweet to taste, but it contains sugar nonetheless. When you eat this type of food, you don't eat enough fiber, which is contained in vegetables and fruit. With bread products, sugar passes through the blood quickly, and thus raises the blood sugar level. With higher fiber, it passes more slowly.

Defacto: So flour-based products, through their processing, are converted to sugar very quickly?

RG: When you eat a piece of sugar, it stays in the blood maybe 15 minutes. It's very quick. But when you eat bread, it stays longer, maybe 45 minutes to an hour. The sugar in the bread is mixed with other nutrients.

Defacto: Can we avoid such disease through nutrition?

RG: Yes, we can. If we can diversify our meals by including more fiber, more vegetables, more fruit.

Defacto: Raphael, I saw your interviews on all the major channels in France, and your articles in major magazines—

particularly women's magazines—about watching one's weight and lifestyle. You've become a very popular man, in that sense. What are the best combinations of food for people to become fit?

RG: To be fit, for example, you should eat bread or an egg in the morning; meat or starchy food like pasta or rice for lunch; meat for dinner; and fruit at each meal. Meat is important for a balanced diet. It provides protein, which is very important for muscles. You should eat different types of meat. Beef and lamb give you iron. Chicken is less fatty than beef and lamb, but it has less iron. Your bones need minerals, like calcium, which you can find in dairy products, like airag.

Defacto: Should we eat fruit at the beginning of the meal or after? And why?

RG: Some think it's better to eat fruit at the beginning of the meal because the sweet taste reduces hunger. But traditionally, we eat fruit at the end of the meal. However the order has no effect on the digestion process.

I think we should eat fruit after the meal because of its effect on blood sugar. If you would eat the fruit at the beginning, there is nothing already in your stomach, and so the sugar goes straight to your bloodstream. If you eat the fruit at the end of your meal, the sugar is mixed with the other nutrients, which the body prefers because it does not increase blood sugar very quickly.

Defacto: Some also say that you should eat much in the morning, less in the afternoon, and nothing in the evening. Is that true?

RG: Yes, it's truly correct. In France, we have a saying: "Eat breakfast like a king; lunch like a prince; and dinner like a pauper." If you can eat a big breakfast it's better, because it provides plenty of nutrition for a good day, and to not be hungry between meals.

Defacto: You are yourself very fit. What's the secret? Is it only nutrition? Or do you also exercise?

RG: I also exercise because I love it. I run, play tennis, practice martial arts almost every day. I wake up at six o'clock, exercise from 7-8:30am at the gym, and then I go to work.

Defacto: I've been to France and Italy many times, and

I always wonder: you eat flour, bread, fresh everyday. Every breakfast starts with bread. And yet it contains a lot of sugar. Why are French people not so...big?

RG: When we eat bread in the morning, we eat it with fruit. We eat various vegetables for lunch. We eat a piece of bread, not a whole loaf.

Defacto: What about orange juice?

RG: I think it's better to avoid orange juice. You should have fresh fruit instead. Orange juice contains a lot of sugar. A glass is equivalent to three or four oranges, but you would otherwise eat only one for breakfast.

Defacto: What about particular vegetables? For example, here in Mongolia we eat cucumbers, potatoes, and tomatoes with our meat for lunch.

RG: In France, potatoes are considered starchy food, so a lot of sugar. Cucumbers, tomatoes, eggplant, spinach—these don't contain as much starch. So if you mix them, it should be good.

For dinner, it's better to a meat with low fat, like chicken or turkey or fish, if possible. It's better to avoid bread, potatoes, rice, or pasta at that time because you don't burn many calories when you sleep. Ideally, you should finish your dinner by 8pm so as to allow a few hours for digestion before you sleep.

Regarding pasta, it's better to eat the pasta al dente, which means not overly cooked or soft. If you cook the pasta too much, the sugar passes through the blood stream faster. So it's better to not cook the pasta too long. Italians generally eat pasta as a starter, which is a smaller portion, and not as a main dish.

Defacto: If one were inclined to drink alcohol, is there a kind that is preferable, in terms of health benefits? And for wine specifically, should we drink before during, or after food?

RG: During food is better. Just as we should eat our fruit at the end of the meal, wine likewise contains sugar, and should pass slowly through the bloodstream. As for alcohol, wine is preferable. It contains less alcohol, which is better for the body, particularly the liver. Red wine especially contains antioxidants which have health benefits.

Defacto: Let's focus now on kidney disease, for which you consult with many clients.

RG: Kidney disease is a complicated disease. In France, when you eat too much protein, such as when you do a protein-only diet, it damages the kidneys. I have a special diet for my clients who are suffering from kidney problems. I

explain to them which type of food to eat and to avoid.

Defacto: So what is the most dangerous food for the kidneys? Or is it a combination of food?

RG: It's a combination of different food: protein and salt. You have to avoid these two when you have kidney problems.

Defacto: In general, we are advised to consume only a small amount of salt. Is this correct?

RG: Exactly, because it affects your blood pressure. If you consume too much salt, you blood pressure rises.

Defacto: Why did you decide to become a nutritionist?

RG: I always wanted to have contact with other people. I like to explain, to advise, to help people. I met someone when I was younger who was a nutritionist. She explained to me what a nutritionist does and how we can help people, and I liked it.

Defacto: And how long did it take for you to be recognized as a professional?

RG: Maybe five years after I started. I had written some books on my cooking method, the "Méthode Gruman". In the books I explained my processes and gave diet and exercise advice. I also wrote about sleep because sleep is important for a balanced diet. When you don't sleep enough, you have to eat more.

Defacto: I saw you drinking beer earlier, but you said it was bad.

RG: Yes, beer contains sugar, maybe twice as much as wine. But we can drink beer, just not too much and not too often. It's better to limit consumption of 2-3 drinks maybe only twice per week.

Defacto: What can you tell us about your clients?

RG: My clients are mostly women, maybe 80%. They came to me in order to lose weight, but maybe only 5-10 kilograms. I provide each with a personalized diet and exercise program. Every two weeks we change up the diet. Normally, we aim to lose one kilo per week. Any more or any faster would make stabilizing the weight loss more difficult—it could increase after that. Ideal weight depends on, for example, age and body type. We try to fix the weight target in advance.

This interview has been edited for space and clarity

2017.11.18

Full interview available here:

<http://jargaldefacto.com/article/rafael-gruman-raphael-gruman>

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BUDGET VETO

Presenter: We begin with the latest on next year's budget, which is key to continuing the \$5.5 billion IMF led bailout that Mongolia secured this year. However, this week President Battulga vetoed the proposed budget, saying it would create too big a deficit and therefore violate the IMF deal. So, Jargal, what was his reasoning?

Defacto: Well, mostly the reason is that the deficit is too large and the budget is spending too much. Of course the current ruling party shot back saying, "Look, this budget was made by your party in the past." Then they brought out the statistics: Mongolia had a budget deficit as large as 17% before, now it's down to 10%, and for 2018 it's projected to be around 8% of GDP. But even that is a big deficit. For example, the OECD requires a budget deficit of only 2%. So the question is, why does the budget keep up the high deficits?

Presenter: The president said that the deficit has been steadily increasing, this despite Mongolia's economy picking up in the last year. We have seen growth of more than 5%, which is a huge rebound from last year's 1%. Why is there still such a deficit?

Defacto: Well, one reason is that the president has said that each MP has their own budget of MNT3 billion to spend in their own district constituency, which gives the impression that we have multiple budgets: one from the government, the other from parliament. If each MP has their own big budget, who will provide the independent oversight necessary to ensure efficient spending? One MP will say, "We need schools in my district." Well, yes, of course, but why don't we add that money to the general education budget and spend it through that? That is one reason why the budget expenses are getting higher and higher.

Parliament has the power to override the president's veto with a two-thirds majority vote. That is, every time the president vetos a law, if two-thirds of parliament override the veto, then the law proceeds as is. Such was the case with the budget proposal. The minister of finance also said that the

government's money was taken from the state bank and put in commercial banks. They wanted to save the government's money with a high interest rate in order to gain more interest. The finance minister said that they will stop such practices.

Another reason the budget is so high is that we are still serving expensive foreign debt that was raised through bond issuances. For instance, in addition to the \$500 million Chinggis Bond payment coming due, we also have the \$160 million payment on the Dim Sum Bond. Altogether the government will have to pay \$660 million by early 2018. And for that the government recently raised \$800 million through the Gerege Bond, which was \$140 million more than was necessary to make the payments. But every time the government issues a new bond to pay an old bond's debt, they keep increasing the total amount. No one is thinking about buying back some bonds with the cheaper money. There continues to be more and more spending, with less and less transparency about the efficiency of the spending and what they are spending the money on.

Presenter: Starting in January 2018, the tax level will increase 10-25%, depending on the person.

Defacto: I would like to offer an example of that tax increase: If one were receiving a monthly salary of MNT1.5 million or about \$600, they will have to pay around \$125 per month more in taxes. This is quite high. And the price of goods too is already high. So people are unhappy. We still don't know how efficiently our government is spending our tax money. That is a concern for all of society.

Presenter: The tax increase will affect people who have been educated overseas, for example. Young Mongolian professionals who have come back here, and who are contributing to this country's economy.

Defacto: And I'm afraid it may cause those young people to go back, to leave the country. Anyone who invested so much in their education, if they don't receive at least \$600 per month, and if they now will get \$125 less, well...

TAX BLACKLIST

Presenter: Speaking of tax, the European Union listed 17 countries on its first-ever tax "blacklist", and Mongolia is one of them. The EU says Mongolia along with Panama, South Korea, Trinidad and Tobago, the United Arab Emirates and others are "uncooperative" jurisdictions, when it comes to preventing tax evasion and avoidance. Jargal, what does this categorization really mean?

Defacto: I find this a little too much. The European Union cannot stop the healthy (or unhealthy) competition among jurisdictions to attract more foreign investment through lower taxes. This is normal competition among nations.

And why must Mongolia increase taxes when the tax payers are not happy? The taxpayers don't see proper accountability and transparency in our tax spending. And yet the European Union, instead of demanding that the Mongolian government be more accountable and transparent to its own citizenry,

are now suggesting that we increase taxes. I think this is a completely wrong approach.

In Europe, there are several countries who have lower taxes, like Malta, Luxembourg, Ireland, the Netherlands. Why are they not listed? Plus, since we are talking about taxes, we should consider the double-taxation agreement. For example, Mongolia has a double taxation agreement with the Netherlands, which prohibits taxation of the same income twice.

But, again, this will not be the end of competition among jurisdictions to attract more foreign direct investment through lower taxes. Lower taxes are a good thing. Why should we increase taxes when the taxation process is not clearly reported? We are against that. The people are against increasing taxes in this country. We are taxed enough, and we are tired of it. We don't see the government being

properly accountable and transparent with regard to taxes. In particular, in such a mining-intensive country like Mongolia, the government's people are getting richer and richer, while ordinary Mongolians are getting poorer and poorer.

More tax means less business for ordinary business, particularly small and medium enterprises. So I think the government and the EU have a lot of work to do to explain to ordinary Mongolians who are struggling with their daily needs.

DRUNK AND DEADLY



Presenter: Now, with "Shine Jil" season upon us, and more parties to attend, you might want to think twice about how you get around. Mongolia's latest traffic accident data reveals that almost 500 people were killed on the road this year, and drunk driving was the main cause.

What's the legal limit for drinking when going behind the wheel?

Defacto: Well, that's not very clear. But last year they increased the penalty for drunk driving. According to the new traffic law, if you drive while intoxicated, the penalty will start from MNT384 thousand (\$157), and your driver's license will be revoked for 6-24 months, and you might even get up to 30 days jail time.

Presenter: According to the data, half the people killed were pedestrians and cyclists. They weren't even in cars. I mean, we see this all the time in UB. We are trying to cross the road at a crosswalk, the "walk" sign is on, and there might even be traffic police on duty, so it should be the pedestrian's right of way. But drivers seem to disregard the rules. I myself have been nearly run over multiple times.

Defacto: Part of it is a cultural issue. We have a lot of internal immigration in the country. People who have just come to the city immediately buy a cheap car, and then they drive their cars like horses.

But I would also like to highlight an issue with Japanese cars. Mongolia, like our two neighbors, China and Russia, is a country of right-sided driving rules, which means the driver and steering wheel are on the left side of the car. And yet, half of the cars in Mongolia today are Japanese cars, which have the steering wheel on the right side. So when a person driving a right-sided car in the right lane tries to pass a car, they can't see the oncoming cars in the left lane unless they are out in the middle of the road—which of course leads to accidents.

Presenter: I actually saw a Prius flip and crash on the road to Darkhan, just coming around a corner. It was pretty terrifying, but all four passengers got out alive because they were wearing seatbelts. But the driver was indeed drunk. How do we raise awareness of this issue?

Defacto: Some have called for changing the driving rules to left-sided driving, in order to accommodate all of the Japanese's cars already on the roads. But how would we become a transportation corridor between two right-sided driving countries if we drove on the left? The government should announce that starting from a certain year, they will not allow left-sided cars to be imported to Mongolia.

Another problem is the batteries of all these Priuses. I don't know what we will do with the 100,000 old Priuses and their batteries when they stop working. We don't have the facilities to store or recharge or dispose of these batteries. So it's just one more ecological problem for Mongolia to deal with.

DINOSAUR DISCOVERY



Presenter: And finally, scientists have discovered a new dinosaur from a Mongolian fossil. The so-called "murder swan", named the Halszkaraptor, has crocodile teeth, clawed wings, and flippers. The amphibious predator is thought to have lived 75 million years ago, maneuvering on land and through water. But as is so often the case with Mongolian fossils, this was illegally exported, and has been in private hands for years. Mongolia has such a rich collection of dinosaur bones. Why are they so vulnerable to smuggling?

Defacto: That's the problem that I want to highlight from this discovery. It's certainly a strange creature, but I think our customs system is even stranger. This creature could fly 75 million years ago, but now as a fossil it cannot. So how did it somehow cross the border? That's the question I have for the head of our customs office: How did this fossil cross our border

unnoticed?

We have a lot of problems with our borders. Many things are smuggled across. A few years ago, Chinese customs even found a body inside some cargo. No one from the Mongolian side could explain how it happened. And recently there have been problems with smugglers circumventing the checkpoints at the border. Chinese officials have complained, but Mongolian officials cannot explain how it happened. One must ask: Are we safe? Do we have control over our own borders?

Presenter: The good news is the scientists say they will return it to Mongolia once they have finished studying it.

This review has been edited for space and clarity

Full review available here:

<http://jargaldefacto.com/article/defacto-review-2sh17-12-1sh>

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CONTACT US:

✉ editor1@jargaldefacto.com
 ☎ +976 94109342
 🌐 www.defacto.mn