

Balneology: heading toward the future

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In the last few years, Thermal spas are the living witnesses of the difficulties found in a large part of the Portuguese population that have no means of attending health treatments with no reimbursement.

Despite the difficulties, balneotherapy persists as treatment for numerous pathologies showing its importance in the improvement of a better quality of life.

Hydrology, although considered by some to be "complementary", is also millenarian.

Unfortunately, the non-acceptance by colleagues of numerous specialties that could interact with medical hydrology is a reality. It is up to those who work in this area to affirm Hydrology as a valid mean of treatment. There are worldwide strategies also applied in Portugal, namely:

- Pre- and post-graduate education in order to promote knowledge and skills
- Development of clinical, administrative and normative procedures with the elaboration of the "Manual de Boas Práticas".
- Cooperation between associations of balneology of different nationalities.
- Research with well conducted studies. This item is of outmost importance to achieve an "evidence-based medicine" and not just a medicine based on empiricism.
- Health Tourism is an area of imminent exploration that should not be underutilized
- Spreading the word: Crenotherapy is an effective treatment for a number of conditions. The target public and the authorities responsible for health subsystems must be aware of those facts

There are a number of European countries where thermal treatments are reimbursed by the State. Portugal as regained the possibility of reimbursement in the current year, although it has not been applied for the moment. The strategies applied are producing their effects.

Social Thermalism is under way again.

The "accreditation" of balneotherapy to the medical class cannot be delayed or forgotten.

The disclosure of the target public should be accurate and clarifying.

The resilience of thermal resorts deserves continuous effort from all sectors involved.

The future of balneotherapy must be defended, in order not to be drowned in the turbulent waters of the recent past that has governed it.

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