

# Opening Conference “Education and Health Promotion”

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## **The primers of the Binomial “Health / Disease”**

The dialectic “health vs disease” was always present in the historical-philosophical evolution of the concept of health. When we want to define Health, we immediately have the tendency to think of disease and vice versa. At the beginning of civilizations men used as an explanation to disease the magical and supernatural thoughts for the events in their return. People of great civilizations saw diseases arising from external causes and health as a reward for their good behaviour. In this sense, it is highlighted at this time the “uni-causality” as a consequence of external factors.

## **Scientific arousal of the Health Concept**

The scientific nature of the concept of health arises with the Greek civilization with the search for a rational explanation for diseases. This civilization gave a great contribution to the reflection and understanding of the concept of health. Through mythology in the figure of the gods a logical association between diseases, treatment, cure and health was established.

Balance and imbalance of moods, lifestyle, respect for the conditions and events of nature in each season of the year were the necessary conditions for health or illness. The philosophical attitude of "thinking health" was to be connected to nature and to have an understanding of the “sense of being” and of “being in the world”. The pragmatic example of this concept may be seen when we look into the practice of the so-called “Asclepiades”. In the island of Kos Hippocrates followed this health paradigm by using nutrition, exercise, relaxation, education and social interaction as main conductors of health behaviour. We still maintain the same principles.

## **Today’s Medicine: shall we finish this binomial?**

Separating the health-disease binomial becomes a necessary and emerging practice today. Unlike illness, throughout history it has become difficult to propose a definition of common sense of “health”. Thus, one should not adopt a closed con-

cept of health, but rather understand how philosophers and scientists have approached health over time in order to bring light, meaning and reflection on the different perspectives on health, as well as to develop a comprehensive discourse of the health context.

### **Philosophical Conceptions of Health in the Contemporaneity**

From the nineteenth century, with the evolution of medicine, technological advancement, modernization and expanded access to information through the media, the population becomes aware of the influence of social determinants on health. It is also established, especially after World War II, that human behaviour may present itself as a threat to the health of all within society and consequently of the State.

As a consequence of this perspective, medicine of the nineteenth century is modified, introducing the control of bodies by means of the standardization of spaces, processes and individuals, necessary for the support of emerging capitalism, being consolidated with these characteristics to this day.

### **Concept of Health Promotion**

An important landmark for health was the insertion of health promotion, so called, at the beginning of the twentieth century, by Henry Sigerist, who conceived the four functions of medicine: Health Promotion, Disease Prevention, Patient Care and Rehabilitation. Another counter-hegemonic vision of the mid-twentieth century appeared in the work of two other sanitarians, Leavell and Clark, with the explanatory model of the "natural history of the health-disease process", as well as differentiating health promotion from disease prevention.

### **World Health Organization**

The World Health Organization (WHO) in 1947 presented a concept that made an analogy, considering the human body a machine and health that generated the proper functioning of this machine. Health becomes a collective responsibility and not an individual, that is, the right to health is also an obligation of the state. Although the definitions of health have changed over the last few years, the most well-known is the proposal by the WHO as being health "the state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not just the absence of disease". This new definition gained a greater amplitude on April 7, 1948 where it was celebrated the World Health Day.

### **Criticism of the WHO concept**

The breadth of the WHO concept has led to many criticisms of a technical, political and libertarian nature, allowing abuses by the State, which would intervene in the lives of citizens under the pretext of promoting health. As a result of the first objection, the concept of Christopher Borse arises in 1977, where health is treated as the absence of disease.

Caponi (1997) states that although the concept of WHO's health is critical, it should not affect its subjective character, since subjectivity is an inherent element in the definition of health-disease and, because it is inseparable from it, a narrow conception, either in an expanded perspective of health.

### **Lalonde report**

In 1974, the Lalonde Report was formulated, based on observations made by the Canadian Minister Marc Lalonde, who brought relevant contributions to the construction of the modern concept of health promotion, differentiated from that of disease prevention. According to the proposed concept, the field of health encompasses human biology, the environment, lifestyle and the organization of health care.

### **Alma Ata Conference: Political Enhancement?**

In response to the criticisms regarding the concept of health proposed by WHO, the International Conference on Primary Health Care was held in Alma Ata in 1978, expressing the need for urgent action by all governments, professionals and the community to promote the health of reaffirming the meaning of health as a fundamental human right, one of the most important social goals in the world. The Conference emphasized the enormous inequalities in the health situation among developed and underdeveloped countries, highlighted the governmental responsibility for health provision and the importance of the participation of people and communities in the planning and implementation of health care.

### **Salutogenesis: Aaron Antonovsky**

Regarding the paradigm change in health, we highlight the concept proposed by Aaron Antonovsky in 1979 about salutogenesis, which according to the author is characterized by the forces that generate health, opposing the pathogenesis.

The vision of the salutogenesis implies in the strengthening of the health of the people, becoming the potential of the good health a tool for a life of quality and productive.

### **Foucault and Canguilhem: Economy and Innovation**

In the conception proposed by Foucault in 1982, with the evolution of the state, health has a "value" within society, seen also as a commercial form and as a source of power and wealth for the strengthening of the countries. According to Canguilhem (2006), health implies being able to get sick and leave the pathological state. In other words, health is understood by reference to the possibility of facing new situations, by the margin of tolerance or security that each one has to face and overcome the infidelities of the environment, or even a guide regulator of the possibilities of reaction. The same author states that health involves much more than the

possibility of living in conformity with the external environment, implies the ability to establish new norms

### **Subsequent Conferences**

Subsequently, there were several International and Regional Conferences for Health Promotion with the purpose of giving voice to the discussions that permeate the health and life of the peoples, sensitizing the adequacy of the guidelines according to the local characteristics. The International Conferences on Health Promotion stand out in chronological order:

- Ottawa Declaration in 1986
- Adelaide Declaration in 1988
- Sundsvall Declaration in 1991
- Declaration of Jakarta in 1997
- Declaration of Mexico in 2000
- Declaration of Bangkok in 2005
- Declaration of Nairobi in 2009

### **Health as a right to citizenship**

Health comes to be recognized as a right of citizenship and duty of the State. Based on the principles of universality, equity and integrity, and the guidelines of decentralization, regionalization and community participation, many National Health Systems (NHS) reaffirm health as a value and a fundamental human right, legitimized by social justice.

### **Paradigm in Science**

The American Thomas Samuel Kuhn (1922-1996), physicist and philosopher of science, in his book "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions" designated as paradigm the *"scientific achievements that generate models that, for a longer or shorter period of time more or less explicit, guide the further development of research exclusively in the search for a solution to the problems they raise."*

Here I dare to advance 3 personal comments:

1. One arrives at what I call "methodological paradigm"
2. The so-called "Evidence Based Medicine" is today paradigmatic
3. The "Medical Act" no longer imposes itself as paradigmatic

### **Concluding ... (the Physician's Role)**

Concluding all this story we may say that the "Health vs. Disease Paradigm" was already present in the ancestral dialectics. This binomial influenced the evolution of the historical-philosophical concept of health and widely exceeds the medical scope. In fact assumes political aspects and may condition the exercise of medicine by limiting (no doubt of this!) the "Free Medicine". The intervention of the

health professionals is of particular importance, obeying a adequate praxis to time and space defined by the context of these interventions. Health Education is the fundamental basis for Health Promotion. Thermalism and Medical Hydrology are excellent tools for Health Education as we will demonstrate in this congress!