

FEMTEC –ISMH an "old" collaboration for a modern concept of balneology applied to health and well being

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Thermal medicine is one of the oldest forms of western therapy and, in that respect, should be considered as a traditional medicine (according to the definition of the World Health Organization).

Based on the above, the "Thermae" as an integrated set of natural resources, facilities, and services, can be seen as a meeting point among different forms of medical culture to offer therapy and rehabilitation, as well as health preservation options.

Today, with the huge progress of scientific medicine, the use of a medium (water) that is apparently simple, yet complex and not at all thoroughly investigated, may seem redundant, if not unnecessary.

In the age of pharmacogenomics, metabolomics, lipidomics, and highly sophisticated diagnostic and surgical techniques, in fact, the role of the Thermae can appear at best out of fashion. Indeed, a more comprehensive definition of the physical and psychic wellbeing of people calls for the acknowledgement of a deep transformation of some key words of the welfare system.

According to the new construction of such term, a shift is under way from the State that only provides assistance and treats diseases (the citizen-user of the healthcare system with a passive role) to the Welfare Community (if we are sick we become partners of treatment, if we are healthy our individual prevention becomes a benefit for the community).

Health, then, does not identify the treatment of the disease, but rather the promotion of well-being and the development of personal skills, taking into account the different individual conditions. It is a true revolution that affects healthcare organization models by shifting the focus from the acute phase to primary and secondary prevention, to the promotion of appropriate lifestyles, and to relations between health, safety, and the living and working environment (White Paper of the Ministry of Health: The future of the welfare model, 2009-17).

Therefore thermalism should not only be judged in terms of therapeutic efficiency, but also as a means for prevention and active contrast to medicalized lifestyles,

i.e. in favour of health and well-being preservation (with subsequent drug-economy benefits) (Agenda of the Ministry of Health: Gaining health).

In short, changing from a static idea of the thermal establishment (solely focused on hydrotherapy) to a dynamic idea of thermal It should also be noted that the onset of a disease often does not depend on one cause, but rather on multiple combined factors (e.g. pollution, nutrition, psychological conditions, prior diseases, etc.). Acting on these and on their negative impact on the body would finally mean implementing true disease prevention.

Medicine, in fact, is (or perhaps should be) aimed at dealing with ill people to help them recover, and with healthy people to help them preserve their health.

Integrated Thermal Medicine, which leverages on the technical and classic know how of medical hydrology and climatology combined, wherever necessary, with traditional therapeutic treatments and techniques based on other medical principles (e.g. traditional Chinese or Indian medicine, phytotherapy, etc.), should see man as a whole, and refuse to focus on one part or one organ, but rather aim at restoring both the ill part and the functional balance of the entire body. Integrative and complementary medicine. However, it is important to note that these are medical deeds that should be performed by professional and qualified operators, supported by specialized and appropriately trained staff.

In this way, only a synergy of collaboration between the Institutions operating in the field of balneology can give a concrete contribution. ISMH and FEMTEC from a long time collaborate together on:

1. European thermal tradition: innovate and implement to ensure the appropriate application of therapeutic and complementary treatments of Integrated Thermal Medicine.

2. Base and clinical research: use base and clinical research to strengthen and enhance the action mechanisms, the therapeutic efficiency, and the related drug-economy business of thermal treatments

3. Complementary Medicine: develop the themes of Complementary Medicine capable to promote the development of medicine as a whole through the recovery of its human and holistic traits

4. Well-being sciences: train and update specialists on the therapeutic role of the Thermae, as well as on approaches to wellness (physical exercise, nutrition, appropriate lifestyles)

5. Technology, management, and quality control: provide updates and advanced skills, also through practical workshops for specialists in the different sectors.

In short, a constant and interesting growth trend is in place that, however, should also be governed through innovation and quality control to ensure stability in the light of international challenges.

These two important elements call for investments to modernize the existing facilities and technologies; for research and sustainable exploitation of water resources; for new marketing and management forms, as well as – particularly – for

research and staff training (at all levels and functions). (topic of the 43 Congress of ISMH)

The points above will be the main topics of the 71st Congress of FEMTEC in Batumi (Georgia) in October 30-November 4, 2018 on "Thermae 4.0" New algorithms for health care, sustainable development and tourism

These are crucial issues both for appropriate execution of the proposed therapeutic and complementary treatments (e.g. beauty treatments and techniques from other cultures), more and more often included in integrated thermal medicine, and to ensure that guests (customers-patients) can enjoy safe, effective, and professional quality.

As practical example we can remember: (you can check and download from the website of FEMTEC) (www.femteconline.org)

- The project HYDROGLOBE (worldwide framework about researches on Balneology)
 - The project Hydrolife (Water and Health) in the occasion of the EXPO 2015
 - The collaboration on the "active thermalism" with the EAPTC (European Association of patients and users of thermal Centers)
 - Joint training Courses in China on Balneology
 - Collaboration with the ISMH Project "AQUANET"
 - Exchange of Experts during the annual Congresses of the ISMH and FEMTEC
- Some information about FEMTEC:

Founded in 1937, FEMTEC (the World Federation of Hydrotherapy and Climatotherapy) gathers the public and private institutions that represent Thermal Establishments in the respective Countries. At present it has more than 30 member Countries (either statutory or affiliated).

FEMTEC, based in Italy, is the only non-governmental organization (NGO) in the sector entertaining official relations (accreditation) with the World Health Organization (WHO).

Institutional relations are also in place between the Federation and the European SPA Association (ESPA), the World Tourism Organization (WTO), the International Society of Medical Hydrology (ISMH), and the Global Wellness Institute (GWI), as well as other outstanding international organizations as EAPTC (European Association of Patients and Users of thermal centers)

FEMTEC has 4 permanent Training Centres: Italy (www.thermaecampus.it); Russia (in cooperation with the International Russian Academy of Tourism, www.rmat.ru); China (in cooperation with CHTA, <http://www.femteconline.org>); Tunisia (in cooperation with the Ministry of Health <http://www.thermalisme-nat.tn/>).