Abstract
Prolonged stay in Intensive Care Unit (ICU) can cause muscle weakness, physical deconditioning, recurrent symptoms, mood alterations and poor quality of life. Physiotherapy is probably the only treatment likely to increase in the short- and long-term care of the patients admitted to these units. Recovery of physical and respiratory functions, coming off mechanical ventilation, prevention of the effects of bed-rest and improvement in the health status are the clinical objectives of a physiotherapy program in medical and surgical areas. To manage these patients, integrated programs dealing with both whole-body physical therapy and pulmonary care are needed. There is still limited scientific evidence to support such a comprehensive approach to all critically ill patients; therefore we need randomised studies with solid clinical short- and longterm outcome measures. © 2011 Sociedade Portuguesa de Pneumologia. Published by Elsevier España, S.L. All rights reserved.

Keywords
Rehabilitation, Mechanical ventilation, Physiotherapy, Weaning.