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Editorial

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## EDITORIAL

Chronic diseases constitute a challenge for the health care area, whether through their increasing social impact or through their subsequent repercussions felt in the lives of those who acquire the disease and their families. Living with chronic disease requires that the individual rethinks his/her lifestyle, includes new activities in their daily life, in many cases confronts limitations, and encounters new and distinct paths by which they are able to continue living.

During the past four decades, we have evolved through distinct dialogues and health care practices with respect to those who suffer from a chronic disease. Initially, our concerns concentrated upon understanding the diseases themselves, finding medication capable of controlling them, or alleviating the symptoms and treating the complications involved. We have since passed through another stage of “educating” people and “giving necessary information”, hoping that they are thus better able to follow or adhere to their treatment. Recently, however, our concern in health care has become the prevention of chronic disease, especially with campaigns oriented to avoiding or slowing the evolution of some diseases, such as those most frequently diagnosed.

I believe that we are witnessing a new era in health care, resulting from a greater comprehension of what it means to live with chronic disease, but also from the perception that prior treatments have not been able to adequately deal with the problems involved. The current perspective is to develop health care education in which the individual living with chronic disease and their family are protagonists in the educational process. The intent is to encounter healthy methods of living with the disease, without denying the extent of the changes that such disease can and do provoke within their lives.

The role of the health care professional includes a commitment to the person suffering from chronic disease and their family. This implies a depth of understanding about the course of the pathology involved, therapeutic measures (clinical or surgical), and the development of appropriate technologies that are able to offer alternatives which support these people and their families, living with chronic disease. This support must not compromise their basic living processes. Within this context, health care professionals need to place themselves as partners in the construction of healthy living. Their role includes sharing knowledge, constantly searching for further comprehension about what living with chronic disease involves and not imposing care and treatment, and finding alternatives that help these people to live with a greater tranquility. The health care shot in the arm has become flexibility, comprehension, being available, and level dialogue among those involved with chronic disease.

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