

The production of care for the elderly

The rise in life expectancy in modern societies is a result of economic development and public health achievements. This is probably the most significant revolution produced by the last century. However, the majority of older people in developing countries still have no access to health care and social security systems meeting their needs.

Even if we were to examine the developed countries, placed side by side in a great “global scenario”, we still would detect gaps and imbalances in the distribution of resources. The greatest challenge lies in equilibrating necessary short-term and long-term measures. This is because this matter calls into question the need for developing “planetary solidarity” in three big dimensions: intergenerational solidarity, risk solidarity and distributive solidarity.

The ageing of a population depends on its social integration and gender patterns, on its economical stability and/or on the presence of privation and poverty. Therefore, in order to be resolute, health has to be seen comprehensively in all these dimensions, never isolated from this context.

As societies are ageing, the health problems of the elderly put pressure on the public health and social security systems. However, disease is neither an unavoidable consequence of old age nor is it limited to that fraction of a population. In addition, the achievements in health sciences and technology have turned a better quality of life for the elderly possible. This is why preventive strategies focusing intergenerational approaches became more important for coping with today's and tomorrow's challenges.

The aim of this thematic number is to contribute to the thoughts about the production of a supportive environment for the elderly especially as refers to the challenge of dealing with the implications of population ageing for the public health system, and mainly with regard to long-term care for the frail and dependent elderly.

We want to share with the readers our concern with this part of the population challenging us to reaffirm our commitment with the health of all, in all stages of the lifespan.

Renato Peixoto Veras and Célia Pereira Caldas

Guest editors