

## FOREWORD

## Well begun is half done

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I have the honour of presenting this first special edition of the journal *Acta BioMedica*, dedicated to the health professions. This initiative, which has provoked widely favourable reactions among those involved, is not an attempt to introduce a new scientific journal onto the international circuit; its true aim is to further widen the catchment area for a scientific journal that has reached its 83<sup>rd</sup> year of publication, and that for many decades has followed the cultural evolution of the scientific world revolving around the society of medicine and natural science in Parma. These special editions are to my mind an extremely important stage in the cultural evolution of the scientific world in the area of health in Italy. The health professions, in fact, after having taken up their rightful place in the Italian academic environment with the introduction of dedicated degree courses, are now beginning to make themselves heard in the world of scientific research, occupying a methodological position between quantitative research, typical of the medical area, and the qualitative research characteristic of the humanistic areas. We are only at the start, however, and there is still an extremely wide quantitative and qualitative gap between research carried out by doctors and that conducted by the other health professions here in Italy, and between research carried out by the latter in the English speaking world and in Italy. We consider that such a tool as that of a journal in the English language dedicated to the health professions, indexed on international search engines and available online all over the world, can encourage the production and publication of research and can thus help to close the aforementioned gap.

Obviously, the aim of the journal's editorial board, besides that of promoting the production, and use of

research by health professionals, is to offer a contribution to the development of skills in the management of patients' health problems and to promote and further the debate on the impact of new discoveries on the practice, training and management of healthcare, partly with an eye to what is happening in the rest of the world. Indeed, experiences in healthcare and health organisation in contexts different from the Italian situation can provide encouragement and interesting contributions to the indispensable reform of the health organisation in the light of cost containment and optimisation of resources. Particular attention will be given to study and work experiences in the needier areas of the world, the so-called developing countries, in the awareness that experiences in conditions that are at times "extreme" can also provide very important contributions to the development of knowledge as well as starting points for thoughts and ideas to complement or modify the wasteful and sometimes inefficient organisational models of the health systems of the richer nations.

Starting from the premise that indexed scientific journals constitute the most important means of scientific communication and discussion and hence of diffusion of the results of study and research, *Acta BioMedica for Health Professions* also aspires to be a means of diffusion of the results of research studies that conclude degree and postgraduate study courses in the health professions and that often remain in researchers' desk drawers. Some Bachelor's and Master's degree theses, Master's level I and II conclusive papers, and Doctorate theses are sometimes worthy of publication as scientific contributions; this journal will contain specific sections for the inclusion of those

contributions considered the most publishable. In addition, there will be special editions of the journal and/or sections of the same for the creation of continuous distance training courses leading to the accumulation of ECM credits (in Italian, ECM stands for continuous training in medicine) by professionals involved.

A particular characteristic of the journal is its interdisciplinary nature. Just like its “mother” journal, *Acta Bio-Medica*, it collects contributions from all the medical specialisations, making for comparison and integration of the points of view of the different disciplines; the special editions devoted to the health professions will also collect contributions and opinions coming from diverse fields of thought. Nurses, obstetricians, psychologists, sociologists and those operating in rehabilitation and prevention all contribute to insuring the “health” of society today. And when we speak of health, according to the most recent WHO indications we mean physical as well as psychological and social wellbeing. The collection of contributions from all these areas will ensure comparison and integration of the different points of view, hopefully leading to the integration in the world of work of the competences of all the professionals operating in the national health system, putting the interests of the user/patient first and foremost.

In this first edition, space will be dedicated to the “humanistic” aspect of the nursing profession. The training of young nurses, by adapting to the professional profile and the recently approved ethical code, shows a tendency towards “demedicalisation” and pays greater attention than in the past to those relational, psychological and sociological aspects characteristic of the professional relationship with patients. The nurse is increasingly seen as a professional who, during the course of therapeutic treatment, is involved with those needs of the patient and his relatives that are connected to the condition of the illness as well as those linked to the treatment of the pathology. The contribution of Foà et al. deals with the needs of patients affected with tumours and those of their relatives, and the article by La Sala et al. evaluates the effect of specific psychosocial training of the nurse on the outcomes of patients affected by ischemic cardiopathy. Equally psychosocial in its theme is the article by Caricati et al., which deals with the collaboration between nurse and doctor now

that regulations have changed the role of nurses in the health organisation. The nursing profession is no longer “auxiliary”, the attaining of a degree putting the nurse on a plane of social consideration different from that of the past.

In A. Sarli’s article, the results of a study of the health problems connected to the “hardships” of foreign carers are reported. Our population is ageing more and more, old people are more often alone because their children are at work, and the need to provide assistance has led to the arrival in Italy of an extremely high number (around a million) of people, especially women, who are entrusted with the health of the aged. The so-called “badanti”, or carers, however, often have a lifestyle which causes damage to their health. The article proposes organizational solutions which help to bring the problem to the surface and allow for a reduction in the hardships of the “badanti” and in the consequences of such hardships.

The contributions of Messerli and Bolliger-Salzmann describe an interesting programme of socio-health education that has been addressed to students of Swiss schools for over 20 years and whose progress has been periodically evaluated by groups of scholars who have pointed out some very positive results in the acquisition of a correct lifestyle and in the development of social cohesion among adolescents.

From the multidisciplinary viewpoint, the article by Costantino et Al. deals with a topic of physiotherapeutic interest: the rehabilitation of elderly people with non-specific chronic low back pain. The results of a classic programme of rehabilitation are compared with those of a modern and innovative one. This subject is of noteworthy interest also because of the great frequency of low back pain today.

Of particular interest is the study by Ndiaye, who, collaborating with the University of Saint Louis in Senegal, evaluated the therapeutic itinerary of the inhabitants of a rural region in Senegal who have at their disposal, besides the scarce resources of the conventional health system, the contribution of numerous healers of traditional medicine, well integrated in the local social organisation and often much appreciated by the population. In the culture of those people the concept of health, illness and treatment is very different from that which exists in our culture; there are, for

instance, illnesses of mystic origins, which doctors and nurses do not know how to treat, but which the expert traditional healers know how to deal with. My personal experience within the framework of the activity of the Centre of International Cooperation of the University of Parma has enabled me to verify in person the high esteem that the so-called “tradipraticiens” in Senegal enjoy and the usefulness of promoting collaboration between conventional and traditional medicine so as to facilitate prevention and to enable us to conduct a census and a check-up on the different types of activity carried out by the healers.

In the section devoted to teaching products for degree and postgraduate courses, this edition dedicates space to two studies that have been the subjects of degree theses in nursing. An organisational research study by Bulgarelli et al. evaluates the possibility of improving the organisation of a surgical department in Italy by introducing experimentally the figure of the nurse with advanced skills. The other research study by Bulgarelli et al. analyses the usefulness in the daily nursing practice of an instrument to measure the risk of dehydration in elderly patients.