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## **THERAPEUTIC EDUCATION TODAY:**

### **EDUCATION AND MEDICAL CARE**

Therapeutic patient education has existed for 30 years in Geneva and programmes have been established for 35 chronic diseases, however nothing has been done in dermatology. For us, therapeutic education is the interweaving of education and medical care. It is an integrated and psycho-educational approach, where the patient lives with his or her disease on a daily basis. The patient, not the medical staff, is in control. Therapeutic education increases the efficacy of treatment and causes better adherence to treatment by the patient, since it facilitates a better quality of life.

Disease destroys life and personal life plans, but chronic disease can cause a patient to mature and develop. Therapeutic education should facilitate the understanding of the patient's needs, not replace them. The patient should be accompanied in the evaluation of mistakes, difficulties and living conditions and objectives should be set. This is required knowledge for implementing and using a methodology.

Educational evaluation is training and development to assist patients without using a restrictive grading system. It is an incredible adventure to live 10, 20, or 30 years, an entire lifetime with our patients, and with atopic dermatitis you also get to know the parents of child patients. Medical staff should be acquainted with the living conditions of patients so that they can be in agreement about the programme to be followed, since for years to follow they will progress, learning together.

The patient must adhere to the programme and should therefore understand what is required of him or her and also understand the pathophysiology of the disease to give meaning to therapeutic education. Without this knowledge, only some beliefs and apprehensions can be eliminated. In order to accept a disabling disease, it must first be known and, above all, understood. Understanding is not an easy accomplishment; patients do not have our medical knowledge. Accepting a disease means shifting priorities, and steering one's life in a different direction. Medical staff members are trained to perform biomedical medicine. We have to re-humanize care, and give control to the patient by changing our medical attitude. Giving meaning to the patient's life, equipping them with a feeling of self-efficiency to learn to develop daily, means that we have to change our medical stance. The patient is a person in good health that has a chronic disease. Giving control to the patient and providing him or her with new identity coherence is the job of the entire medical team and particularly the doctors. Working in cohesion requires the sharing of knowledge between all the specialists of the medical group and interdisciplinarity with the objective of a common medical direction.

A change in attitude on the part of the medical team allows the patient to become a new person while maintaining his own identity. Patients have an extraordinary ability to capitalize on their resources, as limited as they may be. This evolution is possible thanks to the members of the medical team. We must be able to listen to the patient and share our knowledge to be able to establish educational diagnoses together instead of working individually. Educational assessment and objectives must be discussed with the patient; with this approach, the patient does not receive different opinions from specialists.

Several studies have shown the benefits of therapeutic education conducted by multi-disciplinary teams. The patient's quality of life shows the effects and the figures prove it: we reduced cases of patients with foot ulcers by 50% and the number of patients hospitalized by 89%; antibiotics were also reduced by 57% and operations by 87%. Also related to diabetes, there was an 80% decrease in amputations and 90% in blindness. In dermatology we have a hospitalization rate reduced by 80% for asthmatics and a published article stated that every €1 invested in therapeutic education yielded €4 perpatient for almost all chronic diseases. It is this type of result that puts therapeutic education in the spotlight and which we should present to the Minister of Health.

*Currently, French law includes therapeutic education in the treatment of patients with chronic diseases but everything has not been regulated. Italy has begun to establish a real network of medical care offers in the field of therapeutic education and it is essential since we know that in atopic dermatitis there are treatments that are effective once we know how to use them.*

We should guide and not lead the patient. Therapeutic education is humanistic, post modern medicine which takes into account fundamental scientific progress. It is an approach centered on the individual that will allow for effective adhesion to the treatment and improvement of quality of life.