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REVISTA IBERO-AMERICANA DE SAÚDE E ENVELHECIMENTO
REVISTA IBERO-AMERICANA DE SALUD Y ENVEJECIMIENTO

EDITORIAL

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Yesterday, in a small Portuguese town, we heard a conversation between three apparently active elderly people, which made us reflect on a busy life of work and other personal obligations. The three of them in a pleasant conversation, amused and full of stories, talked about the end of life. It was 9 o'clock in a beautiful morning, a mild temperature, the sun was shining in a clean blue sky, a radiant day. They said, 'we are at the end, what we can expect more', and they laughed, they are two men and one woman. She lamented with the pains, they added some more physical and/or mental lamentations. But they laughed in a cheery talking, questioning the ages between them. She said 'I'm 84', one of them said 'I'm 85', the other said 'I'm 86', in a general laugh they said, 'we're young', and they were still affirming, 'we are at the end', and they laugh, one of them replied 'we have to take advantage of these moments because the day is coming'.

We who were in a privileged position of discreet observation, we laughed inward, with the moment we were witnessing, at the thought that time passes quickly and in the near future we are the ones in that social position.

The latest studies show that Portugal is among the countries with the highest average life expectancy at birth. A forecast by the National Statistics Institute for 2080 points to an increase of almost 10 years in the average life expectancy at birth in Portugal in the next 60 years. Currently, this figure is around 77.36 years for men and may rise to 87.38 years in 2080. For women, the increase will be 83.23 for 92.1.

An average life expectancy for 90 years-old was brought in several developed countries, including Portugal. And this fact can bring more problems to the quality of life of the elderly people.

The analysis of reality and different studies have shown that the phenomenon of aging of the population is closely associated with greater longevity and greater prevalence of chronic diseases, consequently multi-morbidities, that cause physical and psychic functional changes. The focus should be on the elderly person with a personal load, in order to increase their capacity for self-care and to take full advantage of the physical and human resources installed in a radial way. Informing and empowering an elderly person for intelligent decision-making regarding the health/disease process and how to use health and social support services is not an easy task. It is not enough to have a multidisciplinary team, who has to be truly imbued and motivated without the spirit of the mission that has to fulfill.

The international recommendations of the different scientific entities reinforce the importance of the adoption of integrated interdisciplinary strategies, aimed at the prevention of damages not only physical, but also mental damage, with early identification of the signs of dementia or its aggravation among the elderly people. New methodologies and innovative technologies are important tools for increasing the physical and mental needs of the seniors. These allow us to know how to intervene, in order to reduce the gap between the existing inequalities in the elderly population, aiming at the early identification of those who may need help, as well as helping to identify and to value some of the physical and cognitive abilities that characterize the wisdom of old.

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