

# In favor of Internal Medicine

**O**n the past 19th October, the Extraordinary General Assembly of the Portuguese Society of Internal Medicine was held in Tomar.

The initiative to hold the event in a non-traditional location, independent of any other scientific event, proved a great success, not only due to the many colleagues who attended, and their valuable participation, but also for the healthy climate of debate and discussion on issues, and the great sense of camaraderie that pervaded among all the participants.

We therefore believe we achieved a positive result, to be repeated on other occasions.

All the topics on the agenda were debated openly and constructively, and some guidelines and conclusions were drawn from the debate that took place, which the Directors of our Society will clearly seek to put into practice.

In this issue of the journal, we highlight some considerations that form part of a wider strategy of defense of the specialty of Internal Medicine, in the current and future context of Medical Science.

The dynamization of the Study Groups, giving them all the support necessary for their activity, the indispensable articulation with the Directors of the Society within the statutory norms, and the divulgation of their action, are among the main objectives to be developed.

The work produced by the Groups of Autoimmune and Cerebrovascular Diseases, Intensive Care and Diabetes *Mellitus*, with their working groups, and the initiatives already carried out, as well as those planned, are proof of their intense, dedicated activity, and the colleagues are urged to make efforts so that the Oncology Group can become equally active and can, within this specific area, amass the widely disperse experience and information that exists, giving the Directors of the Society the necessary support to enable them to intervene appropriately in the defense and prestige of Internal Medicine. In view of the fact that these are very important tools for the achievement and development of the activities of our Society and the realization of its objectives, not to mention the patrimony they represent, the colleagues were informed about the points "New Headquarters" and



the "Revista Medicina Interna" journal, which were analyzed and discussed, seeking better solutions.

Other themes dealt with, and of great interest to the internists, were the 1998 National Congress, to be held in Lisbon, probably at the FIL and during Expo 98, and the route from there to the Annual Congresses.

In accordance with the Articles of Association, our Society voted to join as a member of the European Federation of Internal Medicine (EFIM), the approval of which, after clarifications given by the former Presidents of the Society who were present, will lead to a strengthening of international relations and full and effective representation of Portuguese Internal Medicine and its Society in the European organizations, through the Federation of which we are a member, and the European Union of Medical Specialists (UEMS).

But the theme that sparked off the most productive and liveliest debate was, without doubt, that of

“Present and Future of Internal Medicine”. The positioning of this specialty as the linchpin of hospital clinical activity, its current situation in Portugal, in Europe and in the World, the desired future, and some important means to achieving it, are and will continue to be themes for reflection, but always with the common and constant concern never to jeopardize the unit, in the efforts to promote the prestige and dignity that Internal Medicine justly demands and deserves.

While the technical development of Medicine, with the valorization of new technologies and the automation of various medical specialties, often leads to the clinic being relegated to second place, the truth is that the medical act of diagnosis, though not given the full credit it is due, constitutes, as the synthesis that it is, the most excellent and noble act in the exercise of medicine as a science and as an art.

But beyond the stimulus and allure that this connection between theory and practice constitutes, the integrating aspect of knowledge that it involves, and the service provided to the actual patient, with the overall conducting of the treatment, the medical clinic provides a greater humanization and adaptation of the care provided, as well as a real economy of means, an argument not without weight in the current situation of sharply rising Healthcare costs.

And while it is necessary to know how to value the strength that comes from the fact that Internal Medicine is present in all the hospitals, and the fact that these hospitals work well as a result of medical work, particularly, of the Internists and General Surgeons, with special emphasis on those of the Emergency Services, some measures need to be proposed to the competent entities, giving great and well-deserved importance to Internal Medicine in the hospital context.

We can mention, for example, the desirable expansion of the so-called “common root” in the training for medical specialties, the differentiation of External Consultancies in the scope of Internal Medicine, and changes to the organizational structure of the hospital services, seeking to prevent their disintegration and integrating them in Departments, of which there have been some positive experiences.

At the General Assembly of Tomar, two other proposals were also taken to the vote, and approved. The first was a proposal that the Society publish a collection of selected reflective articles on Internal Medicine, and the second was a proposal suggesting the need to create a Study Group for the elaboration of a text

on the education curriculum and training in Internal Medicine, which would be updated on an ongoing basis, and would form the basis of wider discussion in the Society and the Group. Meanwhile, this group, through the Directors of the Society, should seek to operate in close collaboration with the *Colégio da Especialidade de Medicina Interna* of the *Ordem dos Médicos* (Portuguese Medical Association).

At the end of the works, new members and affiliates were admitted, which will certainly contribute to our Society performing its role of gathering all Internists. To this same end, formal contact was also established with the Group for Internal Medicine of the District Hospitals, proposing a meeting of these Directorships, which was well-received, all with the aim of joining forces in the defense of the common interests of all.

The directors of our society reaffirmed the proposal to encourage more active participation of Internists in the life of the Society, for the effective affirmation of Internal Medicine which, starting with ourselves, must be transmitted to the colleagues of other specialties, and to the authorities and entities more closely involved in the wide range of issues in question. ■



Santana Maia