

Medical SPAs and thermal provisions have been long dealt with especially because of their health character. This special nature of medical SPAs makes them fall within the legal provisions of EU Directive 2011/24/EU concerning patients' rights to cross-border healthcare, which has entitled European citizens to move freely cross Europe to access health care provisions being reimbursed by their national health care systems.

Over the years, there has been a number of workshops, conferences, seminars aimed at comprehending the specific character of thermal services. Yet a thorough analysis of the connections between based evidence medicine and Medical SPAs seems to have been lacking on those occasions. Indeed, scientific and medical research projects are believed to support the very nature of Medical and Health SPAs.

At the same time, health SPAs do represent essential parts of local tourist promotion.

For medical SPAs it is then to set out ways and programmes whereby to promote a higher qualification of their health services also through specific scientific and medical research, which may prove the curative effects of the single medical thermal centres.

Accordingly, it is necessary to strengthen the concept that thermalism revolves around specific based evidence medicine and scientific research, to be integrated with other techniques and complimentary medicine disciplines which in turn are also based on scientific evidence. This should help clarifying that medical and health SPAs are not to be simply identified with wellness centres.

At present, thermal centres are confronted with health budget cuts which may actually undermine their future development.

To discuss and share some development strategies for medical SPAs at the Italian and European level, FEMTEC (World Federation of Hydrotherapy and Climatology) is among the supporting organisations of the Conference on **"Medical SPAs between crisis and development opportunities. Thermal medicine, scientific research, aesthetic and well being medicine and local promotion"**.

The Conference will be held at the Congress Centre of the Comano Terme (Trentino – Italy) on 17th and 18th October 2014.

The Conference aims at underlining the importance of scientific research for medical and health SPAs. This is not only necessary to qualify the health provisions supplied by thermal centres. It is also essential to be granted the institutional accreditation requested at the European level.

The Conference then is an occasion for all Italian thermal centres to deepen, discuss and compare ideas and strategies for the development and growth of medical and health SPAs also in the perspective of local tourist promotion, including the cross-border potentials.

The Conference is addressed to all those whom are involved in the governance and management of health and medical SPAs (managers, general practitioners, consultants, city council officers and politicians).

The Conference addresses the legal, organisational, medical, scientific, comparative and economic issues concerning medical and health SPAs, which will be dealt with by Italian and European experts and academics.

This multidisciplinary approach is intended to contribute to depict some effective development strategies for thermal centres, so as to support their activities and future projects.

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