

# Balneology of the Future

*Sustainability strategies and proposals for new visions of health and well-being at the 74th Femtec conference to be held in Ourense (Galicia, Spain) Oct. 26-29*

**Sustainability and new visions of health and well-being are the key themes of the upcoming 74th Congress of the World Federation of Thermalism FEMTEC, which will be held in Ourense (Galicia, Spain) from 26 to 29 October 2023 with the title**

**"BALNEOLOGY OF THE FUTURE."  
([https://www.femteconline.org/2023 Ourense/index.php](https://www.femteconline.org/2023/Ourense/index.php))**

## **Motivation and purpose of the Congress**

Humanity is facing an unprecedented population explosion, also supported by a marked extension of average life expectancy. Urbanization seems unstoppable. Rapid communications and migration, often uncontrolled or manipulated, are a source of cultural homogenization but also of serious misunderstandings and conflicts. All this is aggravated by the scenario of dwindling food resources due to dramatic climate change.

These phenomena alone explain why the life and biological and mental health of the patient of the future will be increasingly conditioned by the socioeconomic context and thus by variables such as cultural level, income, health knowledge network and relational networks, as well as by epigenetic factors and the genetic characteristics of each individual person.

## **The patient of the future**

In the not-too-distant future, patients will be increasingly confronted with [noncommunicable diseases](#): according to the World Health Organization, cardiovascular, cerebrovascular, neoplastic, metabolic, and especially progressive degenerative diseases, which were less relevant when life expectancy was lower than it is now, will be responsible for 74% of deaths especially in the least developed countries and everywhere in the world among low-income social groups ([see the WHO report](#)).

Unexpectedly, therefore, these environment- and age-related diseases will surpass infectious diseases as a cause of death even in developing countries. This hierarchical reversal among diseases will be even more pronounced when considering not only mortality but also the impact on disability, the latter condition to which curable or, conversely, rapidly fatal diseases contribute less and less than chronic-degenerative diseases.

The progressive deterioration of exposure conditions (diet, stress, environmental pollution, natural and anthropogenic radiation, and smoking) and the acceleration imparted by climate change will contribute to keeping constant or even increasing the prevalence of diseases such as, for example, myocardial infarction, atherosclerosis, diabetes, and chronic lung disease.

## **The contribution of spa medicine**

If these are the prospects for the "patient of the future," one may ask: what actions and solutions can be envisioned for spa medicine? In the face of this situation, what future can we expect for spas and Medical Spas, their role in national health systems, the need for technological upgrading, human resources, research, data collection and analysis methods, and hospitality organization?

The challenge will be to reconcile the new global socio-economic and environmental conditions with the unique specificities of the spa tradition, defined by therapy and environment.

## **The integration of tourism and health demand**

The current challenges of modern, advanced society can be summarized as environmental, human, and personal development and sustainability. How then to integrate the growing demand for health with the infrastructure that enables sustainable development and tourism?

Skills and abilities will have to change for the spa as well as the industry, and problem solving will still be the most in-demand soft skill by 2023, just as critical thinking and creativity will gain importance.

## **Femtec Congress location: a health cluster**

In view of the importance of the topics covered, the choice of the Congress venue in Ourense plays an important role. A spa resort of great prestige and tradition, it constitutes an international model of a "health cluster" in which the quality of the waters, the facilities and the historical and cultural heritage of the Galician region (also known for the town of Santiago de Compostela) excel.