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Health professionals on health economics

Health professionals caring for patients have every right to hold an opinion on the costs of the drugs and other therapeutic options they administer, and should not feel intimidated by the complexity of the data or by economic jargon.

Health economics and drug pricing must take into account patients' interests, health care quality, and appropriate treatments. And caregivers, who have their feet firmly on the ground, have a great deal to say on these matters.

Prevention is better than cure: a major share of available human and economic resources must be devoted to primary prevention (diet, behaviours, infections, toxicology, accidents, etc.), its assessment, and its implementation. This is not currently the case.

Well-being is better than pseudo-sickness. Society as a whole, and health professionals in particular, must remain focused on the real nature of health, the natural course of diseases, and the limitations and risks of all therapeutic interventions. The risk-benefit balance of routine screening and the increasing tendency to treat "anything and everything" should be at the heart of the debate.

A bird in the hand... Better a safe, effective and properly evaluated and implemented treatment than a technological mirage.

Progress in technology, drugs, radiology and surgery have transformed the therapeutic and diagnostic tools available to caregivers over the last fifty years; yet many of these new tools are still not properly used or evaluated. The result has been an epidemic of iatrogenic illness. Strong investment is urgently needed in professional training, rational health care circuits, diagnostic and therapeutic evaluation, and error prevention.

Need-oriented research is welcome. Not all therapeutic advance necessarily consists of major breakthroughs for large patient populations: greater benefit, fewer adverse effects, simpler or safer formulations, and even more regular supplies are all noteworthy advances. More human and economic resources must be devoted to these areas.

We have had quite enough of misleading claims and misappropriation of resources initially intended to improve population health. Most new drugs now offer patients no tangible therapeutic advance, yet are sold at increasingly crazy prices.

We must put an end to this madness and restore a global health policy which ensures that resources are devoted to the real needs of the population.

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