

## Autumn letter 2018

Dear Friends of Médecine de la Personne,

At the end of July, 54 doctors and students, some of them with their spouses, took part in the 70<sup>th</sup> meeting of Médecine de la Personne. In 1947 the first meeting took place on the shores of Lac Léman started by the Genevan doctor **Paul Tournier**. He published his first book 'Medicine of the Person' in 1940 and, along with other publications and meetings, made an impact throughout the whole world which is felt to this day. The subject continues to attract considerable interest.

The medical meetings are held annually in different European countries. Their aim is to share the reality of Medicine of the Person, that is to say, the medicine of human relationship, comprising the living physical-psychological-social-religious context in daily medical practice.

In 2018, as in the past, the three initial days were dedicated to discovery and relaxation. Our French friends managed to show us precious rarities in Paris mostly previously completely unknown to us: the college of the Bernardins, the Salpêtrière, the covered shopping streets, the Fragonard perfumery, inventions from round the world at the Museum of Arts and Crafts, the Louis Pasteur museum. Even the extreme heat didn't dampen the enthusiasm of the tourists. Many thanks to the French team.

I will pick up only a few ideas from each of our rich and interesting talks to tempt you to read or re-read them in full on our website.

In the first **conference**, **Dr Olivier Bredeau (F)** (*Placebo, beliefs and knowledge to achieve humane clinical care*) showed the importance of the placebo effect with its autonomic mechanisms and established that this effect forms an essential means of treatment in medicine of the person, together with empathy, our authenticity, prayer and our relationship with the patient.

**Professor Richard Vincent (UK)** (*Medicine of the person – the evidence of benefit*) showed us by means of analysis of an impressive number of studies, the value of empathy, including a spiritual element, for the healing of different health problems. He also confirmed this from his practice as a cardiologist. **The effectiveness of medicine of the person can be recognised as having been scientifically confirmed.**

**Professor Petr Fiala (CZ)** (*The limits and the potential of evidence-based medicine*): the triad of principles of evidence-based medicine are often neglected; 1. The knowledge and experience of the doctor, 2. The experience of others in the shape of observations and

with statistical analysis in certain groups of patients, 3. The values and wishes of the patient. No human being corresponds exactly to statistics. Facets 1 and 3 are not measurable and are dependent on the individual patient and doctor. It is the relationship between doctor and patient which is essential to make the right decision.

**Professor Bernard Rüedi (CH)** (*The roles of the patient and of the doctor in tomorrow's medical technology*) developed an alarming vision of medicine, with artificial intelligence which generates intelligent robots which the human race needs to be guard against. Genetic interventions could confer 'better' qualities on individuals which would then devalue 'normal' individuals as primitive. Permanent monitoring will recognise (and correct) dangerous aberrations such as metabolic abnormalities. Scientific knowledge will be constantly available and will allow us to make diagnoses and recommend better treatments in individual cases. So what is the point of being a doctor? Who can and must keep control of this evolution and according to what criteria?

**Professor Inge Scharrer (D)** was not able to attend the conference and her talk was presented by Dr Gerda Dietze: (*The patient centre of medical science and practice, embedded in spirituality*). She gives the patient their central place in the world of medicine and focusses on three challenges; economic pressures, the anonymity of telemedicine and the explosion of knowledge. She sees the spiritual environment of the patient and the carer as a gift of 11 precious stones which opens our eyes to God and frames the treatment differently: prayer, hope, courage, but also organisation, wisdom, integrity and still other factors (do read her talk).

In their [reflexions on biblical passages](#), **Annette and Dietrich Heitmann-Schmitz** (*The therapist out of time*) used their own experiences to illustrate the spirituality of the therapeutic relationship as seen in Jesus with the paralytic man at Bethesda, or the paralysed man let down through the roof.

**Dr Ray Foster (UK)** (*Let us learn to dream, my friends*) compares being human to a diamond with multiple facets whose reflexions produce an individual luminosity. Just as Solomon asked in his dream for wisdom to serve his people, we need to seek those important facets as we encounter our patient and link that view of our patient to our scientific view of them.

**Dr Kathy Webb-Peploe (UK)** (*The art of compassion*) based her study on an article by *Dr Samir Dawlatly* where the word 'love' in the text of I Corinthians 13 is replaced by compassion and placed in the context of medical practice. Using examples and quotes from different authors she showed the importance of compassion and its beneficial effect on treatment.



We would like to thank our speakers for these excellent presentations. They provided the starting point for lively discussions in our small groups and created links to our everyday practice. The relationship between medical science and compassion for the whole person as an essential basis for good medicine was emphasized.

In order to celebrate 70 years of Médecine de la Personne, we invited the Bataclown clownanalysts to make us laugh on the Thursday. They succeeded perfectly in sending up scenes of our consultations with and without Médecine de la Personne, having also prepared for their presentations by talking to former members of the group as well as by watching the day's presentations.

The 71<sup>st</sup> meeting will take place in the Czech Republic from 11<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> August 2019 in Tepla in West Bohemia. We will be addressing the problem of 'Patients without capacity'.

The flyer can be found on our website.

I send you warmest greetings on behalf of the équipe.

Frédéric von Orelli

Arlesheim, 30<sup>th</sup> September 2018.