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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Palliative care in chronic conditions and aging from primary health care

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Mr. Director:

I would like to share some reflections on the importance of strengthening palliative care in the context of chronic disease and population aging, particularly at the level of primary health care.

The sustained increase in non-communicable chronic diseases and the accelerated aging of our population pose a major public health challenge. More and more people live with conditions that, although not curable, require comprehensive support to ensure quality of life, dignity, and relief from suffering. In this scenario, palliative care should not be limited to the final stage of life but integrated early into the management of chronic conditions.

Primary health care, due to its closeness to the community and its biopsychosocial approach, constitutes the ideal space for the early identification of palliative needs, the coordination of resources, and the continuous support of patients and families. It is there that a person-centered care model can be promoted, integrating prevention, symptom control, emotional and social support, and interdisciplinary work.

An essential aspect to achieve this goal is professional development. Continuous training, particularly through specialization programs in Family Medicine, equips professionals with advanced competencies to face the challenges of chronic disease and aging. Investing in the training of physicians, nurses, and other primary care actors ensures that the health system has leaders prepared to provide comprehensive and humanized care.

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However, challenges remain: insufficient training of health teams in palliative competencies, scarcity of specific resources, and the need to raise social awareness about the value of such care. Overcoming these barriers requires clear public policies, investment in training, and the strengthening of integrated networks to ensure that no patient is left without access to palliative care, regardless of their condition or place of residence.

In conclusion, palliative care must be understood as a human right and as an essential component of the health system's response to chronic disease and aging. Primary health care, with its comprehensive and community-based vision, is the cornerstone upon which we can build a more humane, equitable, and sustainable system.