

## PRESS RELEASE

### **“The individual at the heart of care and as a driver of change”**

Riolo Terme, April 8 2017

This was the title of the European event promoted by the European Association of Patients and Users of Thermal Centres EAPTC ([www.eaptc.net](http://www.eaptc.net)) and by Terme di Riolo Bagni, held on Saturday, April 8. The event, which took place under the auspices of the Ministry of Health and of the Council for Health of the Emilia-Romagna Region, was organized in partnership with FEMTEC (the World Federation of Hydrotherapy and Climatotherapy, [www.femteconline.org](http://www.femteconline.org)).

For the first time ever, the meeting gathered all the main Associations of Patients with diseases that can benefit from thermal care, alongside specialists, entrepreneurs, and outstanding representatives of the political world, for a profitable operational confrontation aimed at sharing know how and defining possible therapeutic approaches.

The works were opened by Prof. **Alceste Santuari**, Secretary General of EAPTC, who explained the reasons for the event and stressed the “historical” and “strategic” importance of patients and users of thermal care, especially at this historical time of general and economic crisis of national welfare systems.

The Secretary General was followed at the podium by Ms. **Natalia Tchaourskaia**, President of EAPTC, who went through the achievements of the Association – from its establishment to this day – and described its purposes, activities, and actions, also stressing, in particular, that EAPTC intends to promote cooperation with other European and national associations involved in the protection and promotion of the citizens’ right to health.

Opening remarks came from **Giammarco Lanzoni**, Director of Società Alberghi e Terme di Riolo, who acknowledged, in the name of the owner and President **Gino Pasotti**, the scientific and operational importance of the organized event, hoping it may represent the start of a profitable cooperation between Terme di Riolo and EAPTC.

Ms. **Manuela Rondini**, regional Councillor, came next and welcomed the participants on behalf of Assessor **Sergio Venturi**, who was unable to join the session. The Councillor noted that thermal services, part of the Essential Levels of Care in their own right, can truly provide an effective response to the citizens’ demand for health, and declared herself prepared to support the activity of EAPTC, particularly for the region, which is rich of thermal facilities and top-level skills.

Mr. **Stefano Falcitelli**, president of the Medical Association of Ravenna, delivered a much-appreciated speech. After briefly going through the history of the thermae in the West, he asserted the importance of strengthening the link between general practitioners and thermal centres also, and particularly, in view of prevention.

These opening remarks were followed by the scientific session.

The first lecture, by Prof. **Alceste Santuari**, focused on the role of protection associations in the context of healthcare services. Prof. Santuari confirmed the need to frame thermal services within a national and European context, characterized – as it is indeed - by a crisis of public resources, but also by the opportunity to implement European partnerships within the framework of the provisions of Directive 2011/24/EU on cross-border patient mobility (see the attached slide presentation for further details).

In his lecture, Prof. **Umberto Solimene**, President of FEMTEC and Coordinator of the Scientific Committee of EAPTC, stressed the importance of scientific research to support

thermal services. He strongly asserted the duty to develop processes and actions focused on patients and their needs. He mentioned the activities performed and introduced innovatively at Riolo Terme, including the Communication Charter, the Integrated Thermal Medicine **concept**, and the role of research. In his lecture, Prof. Solimene mentioned three fundamental pillars for renewal of thermal care – **credibility, responsibility, and innovation** – from which countries approaching the sector for the first time should draw inspiration. **Lastly, Prof. Solimene mentioned the need for “networking” through the operational and coordinated creation of “thermal clusters” or “thermal cultural districts.”**

Prof. **Stefano Denicolai** from the Pavia University disclosed the study entrusted to him by EAPTC and coordinated by Mr. **Fausto Bonsignori**, the Association’s Vice-President, aimed at profiling patients and users of thermal centres in Italy. Prof. Denicolai stressed that the above-mentioned study is intended to adjust the thermal service offering to patient and user needs and to ascertain whether and how a patient/user-centered approach can trigger innovation and change in therapeutic resources. Prof. Denicolai also explained the structure of the study and the envisaged method: in particular, he focused on the importance of cooperation with certain thermal centres that have already declared themselves prepared to collect the questionnaires that will be administered to their users.

Ms. **Fabrizia Lattanzio**, Scientific Director of the National Research Institute INRCA, a strategic partner of EAPTC in the national survey on thermal patient profiling, explained the medical and social issues connected with demographic change, which imply new strategic approaches to elderly people and chronic patients.

The scientific lectures were integrated by Mr. **Luigi Bertinato**, member of the Scientific Committee of EAPTC and an expert in health tourism acknowledged at a European and international level. He stressed the importance of healthcare flows, and noted that, at this historical and economic time, German patients that used to go to Turkey could be attracted by thermal services in Italy. To this end, however, Bertinato mentioned the importance of a combined and shared action to ensure that patient/user-centered projects and schemes are provided.

The works then continued with a round table coordinated by Prof. **Umberto Solimene**, involving the representatives of a number of Patient associations: Mr. **J.P. Grouzard**, president of the French Federation of Curistes; Ms. **Daniela Quaggia**, Representative of the Active Citizenship Network, an “umbrella” organization gathering more than 100 European consumer protection associations; Mr. **Nikolai Khaltaev**, President of the WHO project GARD, dedicated to chronic respiratory tract diseases; Ms. **Anna Maccarone**, President of the National Association of Psoriasis Patients; Ms. **Erica Lenzi**, from the Association of Rheumatic Patients of Emilia-Romagna, who showed an interesting video; the regional representative of the National Association of Parkinson Patients, as well as Mr. **Federico Gelli**, honourable Member of the Commission for Social Affairs of the Chamber of Deputies and Head of Healthcare of the Democratic Party.

Mr. **Gelli** noted that the existence of 380 local thermal establishments across 20 regions, with over 60 thousand operators, can be leveraged on to provide a response, in terms of prevention, care, and rehabilitation, to the issues of the National Healthcare System, which often needs to cope with the increase of chronic, degenerative, impairing diseases. Mr. **Jean Pierre Grouzard**, President of the French Federation of Curistes, reported on the two-decade experience of his Country and mentioned the importance of entering into a standing European agreement with EAPTC in view of patient and curiste protection, also aimed at strengthening the advocacy of both associations. The representatives of the rheumatic and psoriasis patient

associations expressed their hope to enter into a stable and long-lasting partnership with EAPTC, while acknowledging the role of thermal care as an effective approach to the diseases constituting the object of their associations' action.

Mr. **Nikolai Khaltaev** from the WHO-GARD (the world alliance against respiratory diseases) disclosed worldwide data on respiratory diseases and insisted on the need to design European and international projects and schemes aimed at addressing these kinds of disorders, also acknowledging the important role of thermal care (see the attached slide presentation for further details).

Prof. **Umberto Solimene**, president of the World Federation of Hydrotherapy and Climatotherapy (FEMTEC) disclosed recent data, which points out to over 5 million people in Europe and about one million in Italy using thermal care. Of these, 70.2% come from healthcare companies, 1.2% are private patients, and 1.2% come from social security (ANSA).

In his lecture, Mr. **Gelli** referred to a "bill of law designed by the Democratic Party for the next parliamentary term. "The conditions are in place," he noted, "to review the national healthcare system, as suggested by two indexes: while 11 million Italians have no access to it, 34 billion EUR are collected from the citizens every year by way of private contributions (co-payment and others)." According to Mr. Gelli, the National Healthcare System should be generally reformed in order to provide an effective response to a demand for health and wellbeing that is bound to grow. "The response to chronic and degenerative diseases cannot be solely entrusted to drugs and hospitals," he concluded.

Outstanding representatives of Italian thermal care, as well as journalists and operators in the communication sector, also took the floor. These included Mr. **Lino Gilioli**, President of the Emilia-Romagna Thermal Consortium; Mr. **Emanuele Boaretto**, President of Federalberghi Terme; Mr. **Giuseppe Di Costanzo**, President of Termalisti di Ischia; Mr. **Gino Pasotti**, President of Terme di Riolo; Mr. **Francesco Brancati**, President of the National Union of Medical Scientific Journalists; and Mr. **Vincenzo Ceniti** from Unionturismo.

At the closing of the works, which were greatly organized and supported by Ms. **Giovanna Gherla**, Marketing Manager of Terme di Riolo, the delegates had the opportunity to visit and appreciate the medical facilities of Terme di Riolo that, as a unique example in Italy, provide scientifically validated therapeutic schemes based on integrated thermal medicine, being – among other things – the reference facility of the WHO European Collaboration Centre for complementary medicines. The Thermae also feature a High-Level Training Centre of the World Federation of Hydrotherapy and Climatotherapy.