



How will Covid-19 impact on balneology?

New Thermae in a *new world*

Background

The Covid-19 pandemic constitutes an unprecedented challenge with very severe socio-economic consequences.

The current pandemic has made it clear that there is a strong need for social and health protection, which calls for effective interchanges between healthcare and social services.

The Covid-19 emergency has also stressed that a globalised health threat requires an adequate international governance and response.

Where do health SPAs stand?

Health SPAs/thermal centres deliver health care services and provisions, which can also be integrated with social-oriented services, such as rehabilitation.

Over the last decades, health SPAs have less developed their health-related nature than their tourist corporate image.

This is likely to be one of the reasons why thermal centres are not fully *perceived* to be an essential part of the overall national health systems.

What next?

Can Covid-19 be a chance for health SPAs to think over their future?

Thermal centres supply provisions and services that are supposed to aim to enhance health protection and promote healthy life styles.

In this respect, health SPAs fully fall under the concept of “**OneHealth**” also defined as “**Circular Health**”. This concept implies that humans and animals’ health conditions as well as the environment quality are strictly intertwined and that an integrated management of public health is badly needed.

Against this background, balneology, which is firmly rooted in the Hippocratic tradition, fully comes within the concept of “One health”, thus being part of the overall response of public authorities to the current pandemic.

In this perspective, health SPAs/Thermal Centers may play an important role in the implementation of public health policies and actions, especially with respect to prevention.

The proposal

FEMTEC intends to advocate a set of strategies whereby health SPAs/thermal centres are to:

- a) strengthen their health vocation also by setting up respiratory rehabilitation services for post-Covid-19 patients;
- b) critically revise their recent evolution;
- c) consider their own therapy/therapies to select the one/ones which can better fit with the new demand for health;
- d) develop a set of effective actions and plans in cooperation with GPs and local chemists;
- e) exploit modern digital technology, including telemedicine;
- f) offer their own expertise to national and regional health systems within partnership agreements;
- g) promote more scientific research projects;
- h) improve their own management and organizational patterns so that they may be more corresponding to new health, social and environmental needs;
- i) overcome their individual-centred approach to be part of an integrated and coordinated network, in accordance with their national traditions and legal system.

Umberto Solimene (President Femtec) **Alceste Santuari** (FemtecCommissionHealthTourism)