

## Social Medicine in an Era of Epochal Transformation: Between Science and Biolaw

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**S**ocial Medicine is now one of the most effective tools for interpreting and addressing the global health challenges of the 21st century. The United Nations 2030 Agenda and WHO strategies highlight the need for healthcare that is not only technologically advanced, but also equitable, inclusive and socially oriented.

This editorial project brings together original, multidisciplinary contributions on socially relevant health issues, biomedical innovations, gender inequalities and disabilities, offering a systemic vision that links public health, bioethics, digital transformation and social justice.

The topics covered in this special editorial, proposed by professors who have long been involved in the field of social medicine, are inspired by the evolution of social and health policies that have emerged in recent years, both nationally and internationally.

The achievements in the areas of “care”, “social security”, “protection and defence against disease”, “social and health security and health promotion”, although evolving towards “*human enhancement*”, leave open many concerns regarding global assistance for the protection of fundamental human rights.

Therefore, scientific progress and unconditional trust in technological advancement require immediate and urgent moral reflection to establish the boundaries of legal research and the limits of the application of its results.

The selection of contributions by distinguished scholars in the *Special Issue*, on topics of doctrinal value and great topicality, sets the focus of the discussion on emerging issues of a new (and

one might say futuristic) nature for Social Medicine at a global level, with the aim of emphasizing issues that require profound consideration in order to translate the results obtained by science and technology into the most appropriate practical applications.

The selected articles propose integrated models and bio-legal reflections that combine prevention, treatment and the protection of rights. Although the *Special Issue* is presented in the form of “*original articles*”, it is systematically structured as a sequence of doctrinal reflections on a sustainable future for global health protection in a planetary context marked by a serious crisis.

Health, technological innovations, climate and social justice are the topics addressed. Adherence to the principle of shared responsibility for the protection of the fundamental right to health has led Social Medicine to follow paths aligned with the times.

Its scientific uniqueness and doctrinal profile place it today more than ever in a leading position in the protection of “health” in its most current sense, promoting all those rights attached to the “person” which, in the varied scenario of contemporary globalised society where the most diverse ideologies, cultures and religions intersect, makes the recognition of the dignity of the person is the real reason for reaffirming individual freedom.

The genetic makeup of humans, selected over millions of years of evolution, has adapted us to various environmental changes. Despite this, the human matrix has remained virtually unchanged, while cultural, scientific and technological evolution has had an enormous impact on human life.

Health, although unanimously recognised as a fundamental human right, is still not sufficiently pursued, protected and guaranteed for all people in the world. Known issues, together with

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emerging ones connected to health to a greater or lesser extent, must now be assessed in a dimension that transcends national borders.

The development of technology, means of communication and transport, and the growing phenomenon of migration have made “global” social issues definitively interdependent.

The possibility of making a useful contribution in this regard, starting from different doctrinal perspectives, has inspired us to carry out this project.

This work brings together contributions from scholars from different disciplines, who analyse in an integrated manner the scientific, cultural, legal, environmental and social determinants of global human health as something that goes beyond disease. It is divided into four sections, structured in an orderly manner in relation to the topics discussed. It is introduced by an editorial (by invitation) that outlines the goals pursued by the discipline (social medicine) and focuses on the objectives for the future with forward-looking considerations. The first section addresses the issues of “health as a human right and global justice” from an ethical, bioethical, bio-legal and clinical perspective. The second section focuses on aspects of social vulnerability: disability, social hardship and growing inequalities, with reflections on the pursuit of inclusiveness. The third section highlights the numerous issues related to technological innovations and the applicability of scientific results and manipulations, the protection of the ecosystem, and aspects of translational and predictive medicine. The final section analyses, in summary form, the protection of rights in relation to the applicability of biomedical research and advances in artificial intelligence and robotics.

The articles are presented by the authors individually or in collaboration. The latter are the result of the integrated contribution to the research

undertaken by several scholars, scientists, jurists and ethicists.

There is no shortage of essays that clearly illustrate the historical evolution of awareness of human values which, as such, form the basis of the principles of modern Global Social Medicine.

