

THE CURRENT CONTEXT OF HEALTH AND THE ELDERLY

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Worldwide, we observe a rapid growth of the number of people 60 years old and over. Aging is a fact widely documented by all national and international organizations. The United Nations predicts that, in twenty-five years, Brazil will have the sixth largest population of elderly people in the world, with over 32 million of individuals sixty years old or more. This figure represents nearly 15% of the total population. With the increase of life expectancy, people are able to make plans for their future aging process, turning it into a winning situation. Although this data differs significantly, depending on whether the country is considered developed or underdeveloped. The Ministry of Health makes note of the fact that about 25% of the elderly population of Brazil has no prospect for aging in a positive manner. This is caused mainly by the loss of quality of life, a limited participation in most daily activities, including leisure and, as a consequence, presenting a greater vulnerability to diseases. This is aggravated by the interaction of the various aspects described above with elements originated outside the health context, that involve differences related to socioeconomic and environmental conditions and policies which address the elderly population. The success achieved in the health care field of the elderly does not inhibit the negative view that society has of this portion of the population, and it still represents one of the main factors responsible for the exclusion of the elderly from society and from the family. The optimistic side of this propagated achievement of positive aging is still considered by many rulers as a false vision of an unattainable goal, at least in the immediate future. There is a real need to invest both in the research involving singular contexts, as in the care offered to this population, focusing on more effective health policies. Given this reality, it is important to transform this scenario by stimulating the elderly population into adopting a routine of life that stimulates them and that promotes an active and healthy aging process.