



## **FAMIPED**

**Familias, Pediatras y Adolescentes en la Red. Mejores padres, mejores hijos.**

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# **How to make a suitable use of public health system. A primary attention paediatrician's view**

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In this article, we are going to focus briefly on the suitable use of public health system and on the recovery of the active role that family should play related to their children's health. This is an issue which really worries us as paediatricians and we do believe that all involved spheres (families, health workers and health officers) should reflect on them.

I will refer to some brief aspects in order to contextualize this issue in our own environment. This is a communist world, in a rush, based on the achievement of perfect welfare and on getting material goods related to consume, spare time, etc and where health becomes a consumer article of the crowd. There is no room for patience, sacrifice, effort, hard-work in this pattern. Hence, it is difficult to solve daily situations although these are minor and temporary problems.

We know that parents' role is not easy at all. Bringing someone up makes us face new responsibilities, challenges and difficulties. This also means important achievements and satisfactions. When routine is changed because of an illness, your pace of life suffers in a very unpleasant way and quick solutions are looked for.

From health services, we study with concern how we are reached because of unimportant problems, even repeatedly, although we keep on reminding the same action patterns and we give information about the expected evolution of the symptoms of common illnesses.

Parents usually have unreal expectations on the course of an illness. They think that if they visit health services quickly or that the initial part of a specific treatment can change the course of that illness and can shorten or stop it suddenly but they forget that most of the symptoms they are scared of are expected natural body mechanisms that have to be respected and let happen. For instance, fever is a response to combat an infection. Administering antipyretic medicines helps to improve discomfort symptoms and to reduce temperature to a certain extent. They do not combat the illness itself, which will follow its course in

the next few days. That is the reason why antipyretic medicines must only be used when necessary (high fever, serious discomfort, etc...)

We can also say the same about other common problems such as cough, vomits or diarrhoea that cause great anxiety among relatives and carers and about considering as an illness childhood or adolescence inherent conditions. It looks as if parents sometimes did not feel able and safe about looking after their families and needed a professional doctor for all their actions and cares they would do in these situations that they have already experienced.

The same also takes place when handling psychosocial, behaviour problems or responses to stressful situations within a family. The advice we are asked for can sometimes become a requirement for mental health services to make an evaluation on everyday situation action patterns, as if everything had a medical solution, instead of doing what common sense says.

Bad use and dependency on health services cause a lot of visits to health services that, consequently, are more crowded. This creates frustration in families because of waiting times, sometimes long, in a paediatrician surgery or in Accident and Emergencies. In some occasions, this causes violent behaviours against health workers.

As well, health workers are frustrated because they have little time to deal with more important problems that, under these circumstances, can not be treated properly.

We appeal society in order to become aware that it is the family itself who must look after people's health and, due to a parental initiative, to recover an active role when handling children health problems.

We encourage families to change their attitude, to trust in the attention paid that, in most of the situations, can be summarized as basic knowledge, common sense and a lot of affection to comfort someone in their illness.

Thus, children will learn that their parents are competent in their care and will be more independent and learn to face health problems in a more natural, quiet and safe way. They will know what they can do if they fall down, how to clean a wound, the appropriate diet for vomits and diarrhoea and what to do when fever is observed. And they will also know that there will be other minor problems which have no solution and which have to be overcome, such as colds. They have uncomfortable symptoms as secretions in the respiratory tract and cough.

We also encourage authorities to promote educational campaigns on a good use of health services, on the acquisition of healthy habits and lifestyles and, of course, on strengthening confidence towards self-care.

Respect towards health workers is the basis for a satisfactory relationship which allows a suitable health attention in such a vocational job and whose cornerstone is the medical act in a harmonious relationship doctor-patient/family.

We are all responsible of achieving this, collaborating with our health system sustainability. Let's look after it, let's look after ourselves.