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«Pharma industry is part of the sustainability equation»

One of the themes in discussion at the 27th Congress of the European Association of Hospital Managers was "Sustainability". Filipa Mota e Costa, Managing Director of Janssen Portugal, participated as commentator in this session that had as a keynote speaker Nigel Edwards, Chief Executive at the Nuffield Trust. In an interview with Just News, Filipa Mota e Costa remember that "pharma industry is part of the sustainability equation".

Just News (JN) – What is your vision about sustainability?
Filipa Mota e Costa (FC) – My view of sustainability in Health is a comprehensive one. A public health system should be sustainable from a financial, technical, social and political point of view. In other words, a public health system should have enough public funding to attend with quality to all the defined responsibilities, but also to provide with human and physical resources (technical sustainability) a prompt and capable action.

From a political and social perspective, a system can only be considered sustainable if it earns the endorsement of the majority in the parliament and if the Health Care professionals and patients use it in a responsible and informed way, according to what is expected and reasonable.

JN – In your opinion, what are the main challenges in sustainability at the moment?
FMC – Population ageing, acute diseases becoming chronic, epidemiology, evolution of the Health Technologies – all good news for the Health and Quality of life – combined with budgetary constraints. Portugal is one of the countries in Europe with the most elderly population.

At the same time, Portugal's public expenditure is below the OCDE and EU average in order of the GDP as well as per capita.

In the end, the health budget is the translation of the comprehensive vision I was talking about. If the debt is repeatedly increased into an impressive level that may put in risk the political, social and external endorsement and the system no longer can be considered sustainable.

Demographics, access to innovation, governance model and hospital autonomy of decision, household income and out of pocket are some of the challenges we must face and to we should all be delivering solutions.

JN – How do you summarize the main topics of your participation?
FMC – Pharma industry is part of the sustainability equation. By creating value, innovating and partnering with all stakeholders, Pharma contributes positively to the solution. There are several areas where the Pharma Industry contribution can be more relevant e.g. clinical trials, knowledge share, innovative funding solutions. With a proper environment we could impress a wider and stronger impact to the economy, to jobs creation, to researcher's and patient's needs.

JN – What is your comment about the congress theme "Redefining the Role of Hospitals - Innovating in Population Health"? What is the relevance of it?
FMC – It is critical that hospitals are flexible to redefine their role and innovate in population health. Indecision and inaction will not win this century. We do believe there is a huge potential in Portugal to improve and make a difference to patients.

Hospitals have to become more autonomous and funding should be based in a more effective and value-based model. Pharma Industry and Hospitals have to work even closer to build new solutions and governments should be alert to this change and promote Hospitals, Managers and Healthcare Professionals in this update.

JN – The national reality is very different of the other European countries?
FMC – The national reality has some nuances of its own. Health inequalities remain a general problem in the country with inequities being determined by gender, geography, income and literacy. The burden of out-of-pocket for households is one of the highest in Europe and the taxes are also high.

Nevertheless, and as I told before, Portugal's public expenditure is below the OCDE and EU average and Hospital debt rises every month. There is room for further efficiency gains in health care delivery in Portugal and Health technology could be used to monitor and improve the system's quality.

JN – What are the main challenges in Portugal?
FMC – The challenges in Portugal are not that different from the rest of the other European Countries. The main challenge is how to balance financial sustainability with the raise of healthy life expectancy and NHS improvements. But to overcome this issue some changes are meant to be done.

Health budget is totally depending on the political cycle and it cannot. Investment on primary care and prevention (with medium long-term results) are not a priority but they should. Hospitals are funded by the global budget – based on historical production and capitation, not results.

Inequalities are yet to be solved and access to innovation takes too long and contributes to it. Hospital lack of autonomy has to be solved in the near future and clinical trials have to be promoted -- there is a huge untapped

potential in this area in Portugal.

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