

Assistència Sanitària, proof of the success of health co-operativism

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**Assistència
Sanitària**

LA MILLOR ASSISTÈNCIA DE LA TEVA VIDA

Assistència Sanitària marked International Co-operatives Day by confirming its leading position in terms of volume of premiums, demonstrating the validity of the co-operative healthcare model based on self-management and equality of doctors and users on decision-making and administrative bodies. The economic crisis is providing the spur for the creation of co-operative enterprises, in some cases serving as an essential tool for economic and social development.

Since it was founded in 1957, Assistència Sanitària has been at the forefront of the private health sector in Catalonia: it now has a list of 5400 doctors, has 200,201 policyholders and is the market leader in size of premiums (166.4 million euros). The organisation, which has become one of Catalonia's flagship enterprises, was created out of a desire to improve civil society, and is one of the country's leading exponents of the co-operative movement. First conceived of by Dr Josep Espriu, the Assistència group is based on a balance between the doctors' co-operative (Autogestió Sanitària) and the users' body (SCIAS), allo-

wing for dialogue on equal terms, unfettered by any profit motive or shareholder returns (all the profits are reinvested in improved facilities or staff).

Despite the downturn in the incorporation of capital-based companies over recent months, co-operatives have shown themselves able to adapt to the complex economic situation, with co-operative enterprises being set up at a faster rate in 2009 than in 2008 (some one hundred such organisations are founded each year in Catalonia). Health co-operatives now serve 100 million households worldwide. With the aim of publicising the role of healthcare co-operatives and promoting their creation, Assistència Sanitària plays an active role in the Espriu Foundation, which in turn is the Chair of the IHCO (International Health Cooperatives Organisation).

Since its launch by the UN in 1995, the first Saturday in July has been International Co-operatives Day, providing recognition for co-operatives as an essential factor in economic and social development, with solidarity as their key working tool.