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E S P R I U

Compartir

Healthcare cooperatives and social medicine magazine

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How do cities affect our health?



Health

Winter time: an hour less means many changes

In depth

Green spaces and less noise to live better

Lifestyle

Do we eat too much salt every day?

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Cooperatives and social medicine

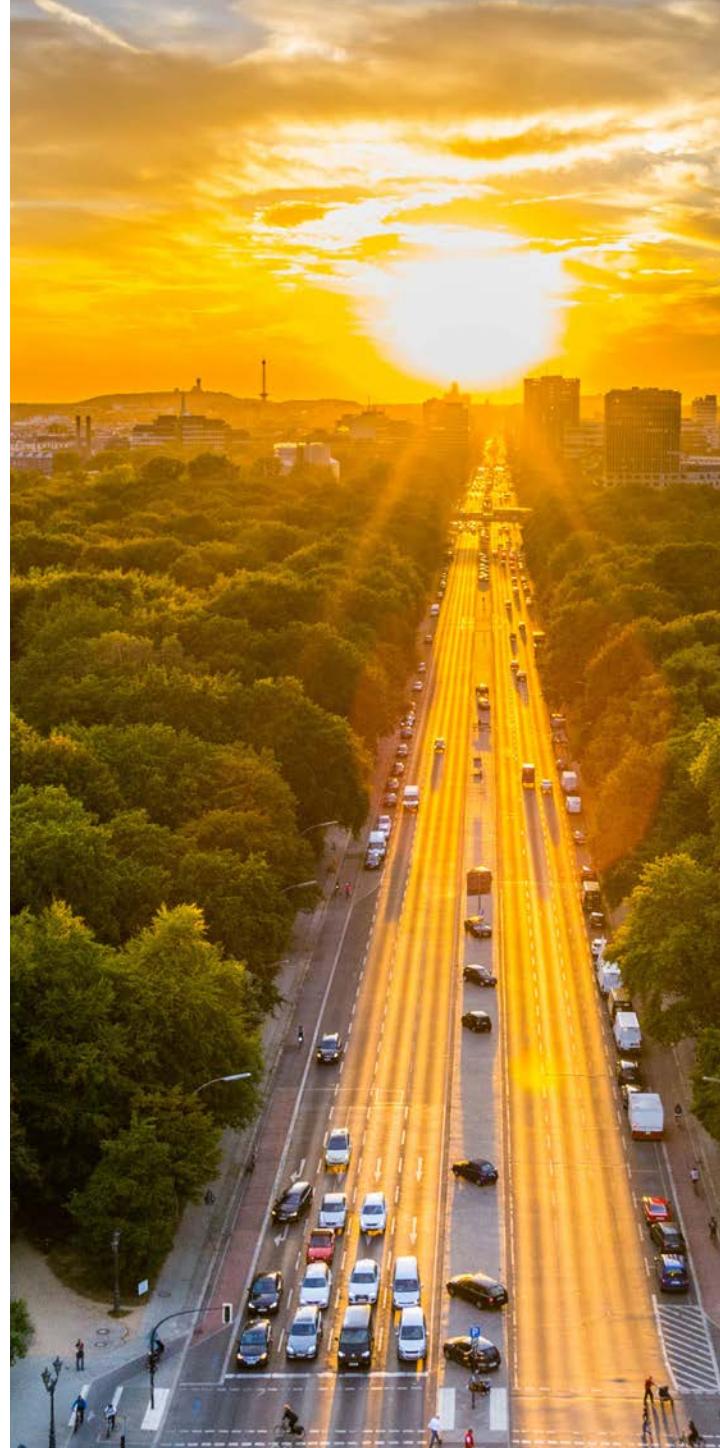
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Editorial

Time for change

As autumn starts to make an appearance, it makes us recall that the last Sunday in October, once again, we will change the clocks. At three o'clock, it will be two am and once more, we will enter winter time. A change that causes difficulties for many people that in Spain has been carried out since 1940. But, why do we use the same time zone as Germany and a different one to Portugal? We analyse all the factors, as well as the pros and cons that changing the clocks entails, amongst which are the problems for getting a good night's sleep during the first few days. We talk to Paula García Casanova, a psychologist specialising in sleep from the HLA Group, to analyse how a lack of sunlight makes some sleep problems more acute and why some population groups suffer more with this change. The same occurs on a daily basis for cross-border workers, who live in a double time zone that restricts their quality of life.

Our health is marked by the place we live. In this new issue of Compartir we have analysed how our everyday surroundings have a determining influence on our organism. Different studies confirm that the vulnerability of those who live in unhealthy surroundings, where the noise, pollution, excess heat and lack of green spaces have direct repercussions on their quality of life. The future involves seeking innovative solutions in the large cities and transforming them into traffic-free spaces for socialisation, where parks and spaces for meeting and practicing open-air sports predominate.

The environment where we live has a decisive influence on our quality of life

This same physical and emotional well-being can also be seen in the action of dancing, an aerobic activity that has a positive effect on the levels of happiness and enthusiasm of its practitioners. Slow steps or a fast rhythm, the movement always helps to strengthen our muscles and joints, as well as preventing heart diseases. Some of these are generated by a high consumption of salt, a mineral that is essential to regulate our organism, but a high daily consumption of which causes many health problems. The figures confirm that our daily salt intake is too high and the solution to bring a halt to this excess involves education and responsible consumption.

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Established in 1989, the Fundación Espriu integrates the entities using the cooperative healthcare model created by Dr. Josep Espriu: Autogestió Sanitària, Scias, Lavinia and Asisa, which make up the Assistència and ASISA Groups.

 Autogestió Sanitària **Lavinia, S. Coop.**  **SCIAS**  **ASISA**



How much longer will we continue to change the clocks?

At the end of October, in Spain we put summer time behind us: the clocks go back an hour to adapt to winter time, but where does this custom come from? Why do we continue to do it?

by **Ángela Zorrilla**

In Spain, the last Sunday in March and the last Sunday in October are marked in red on the calendar. These are the days when the clocks are changed. Summer time and winter or daylight saving time, both born many decades ago, aimed at taking advantage of sunlight and consuming less energy. But, according to a report by the Institute for Energy Diversification (IDEA), this energy saving only represents 6 euros per person/year. Time has always been a chaotic subject in Spain. Before the 20th century, each province or community carried out their own time changes at their own convenience. Then Greenwich Mean Time was established as the official basis for Spanish time changes. And the first summer time occurred in 1918. But Spanish times have been out of sync sin-

ce Franco's time. Specifically, since 1940. Spain started to follow the German time changes as a gesture to be 'closer' to Hitler.

The truth is, Spanish clocks should be in time with Portugal, but they aren't. The fact is that geographically Spain should be governed by London's time zone. Since 1940, everything that happens in Spain really happens two hours ahead of time with respect to the sun. This is the reason that Spain's customs are all later: having lunch at 3pm or going to bed at 11 pm. In reality, with respect to the sun, we eat at the same time as other European countries at 1 pm and we go to bed just as early. Spain's current time zone is CET, Central Europe Time, the same as Vienna, Brussels, Berlin or Amsterdam, but due to its geographical position, it is located in the zone corres-

ponding to Western Europe, as are the United Kingdom and Portugal.

DOES EVERYONE CHANGE THE CLOCKS?

Traditionally, the criteria have changed regarding taking part or not in putting the clocks back or forward. Since 2018, the European Commission has been debating whether to eliminate these time changes in the member states, after 84% of the 4.6 million European citizens who took part in the consultation voted in favour. Now, the problem lies in the fact that time zones remain fixed in each country and this point is where there is rising disagreement. The European Commission itself, which put the proposal for cancelling the time changes on the table back in 2019, went back on





Did you know that...?

- There are many countries in the world that don't change their clocks. In fact, most of Central America, South America, Africa and Asia have no summer/winter time change.
- During the Spanish Civil War there were two different time zones that depended on whether the areas belonged to Republican or Nationalist bands. For this reason, the war ended at different times according to who is explaining the history.
- In 1784, Franklin published an essay titled "Economic project to reduce the cost of light" in which he proposed bringing the clocks forward to take advantage of the morning sun. Although, it is believed that it was later on, in 1895, when the astronomer George Vernon Hudson took over the idea of changing the clocks.
- The first time it was put into practice was April, 1916, in the middle of World War I, to reduce the use of coal during the conflict.
- Russia is the country with most time zones, with a total of 11. In fact, some states do not even follow the international rule of complete hours. There are places where the time difference is 30 or 45 minutes. An example of this is the Indian city of Bangalore.

its statement indicating that “no rushed change should be applied to the time zones” without all the European citizens knowing “the risks and opportunities that this involves.” Spain, taking into account the official calendar published in the OSG, will continue with European time and will continue to officially change the clocks over the next five years. Therefore, the last change won’t take place until at least March, 2027.

At the same time, while the debate remains open and unresolved in Europe, the United States Senate has already voted for permanently implanting summer time from November of next year. Up to now, in the North American zones with latitudes closer to the Pole, as occurs in Alaska, residents can go for over 4 months without seeing any light. This is translated into

being one of the zones with the highest rates of depression. Figures that are hoped will drop with this new law. And the fact is that, really, not all the countries around the world change their clocks twice a year. It is a very deep-rooted practice in Europe and North America, but it is not popular in India, China or Africa. Indeed, only 40% of the countries in the world change their clocks.

The lyrics of the popular Mexican song stated “reloj, no marques las horas porque voy a enloquecer” (clock, don’t mark the hours because I am going to go mad). And the fact is that beyond the benefits regarding the use (and the bill) for light, another factor is added to changing the clocks: health. This kind of self-imposed jet lag can cause fatigue, somnolence, insomnia, lack of concentration or irritability. ■



Summer time

In favour

- ▲ People wake up with sunlight and this helps them to become more active.
- ▲ Moods improve considerably when the day can be lengthened with natural light. More time with light means greater exposure to the sun, which means more vitamin D and therefore, a decrease in the risk of suffering from depression.
- ▲ More hours of sunlight means more time to enjoy leisure activities, physical exercise and social contacts.
- ▲ As there are more hours of light, less energy is consumed and therefore pollution is reduced.
- ▲ According to data from the Institute for Energy Diversification and Saving (IDAE in its Spanish initials) each household saves 6 euros a year in electricity thanks to changing the clocks.

Against

- ▼ By bringing the clocks forward, the population sleeps an hour less and it is normal for sleepiness to increase, along with concentration difficulties and reduced performance.
- ▼ Changing the clocks causes alterations in the organism. Generally, it takes seven days to adapt to the time change.
- ▼ In the summer time, the days are longer and there is less opportunity for rest.
- ▼ Some studies consider that the spring time changing of the clocks entails an increase in cardiovascular problems.

An hour means many changes

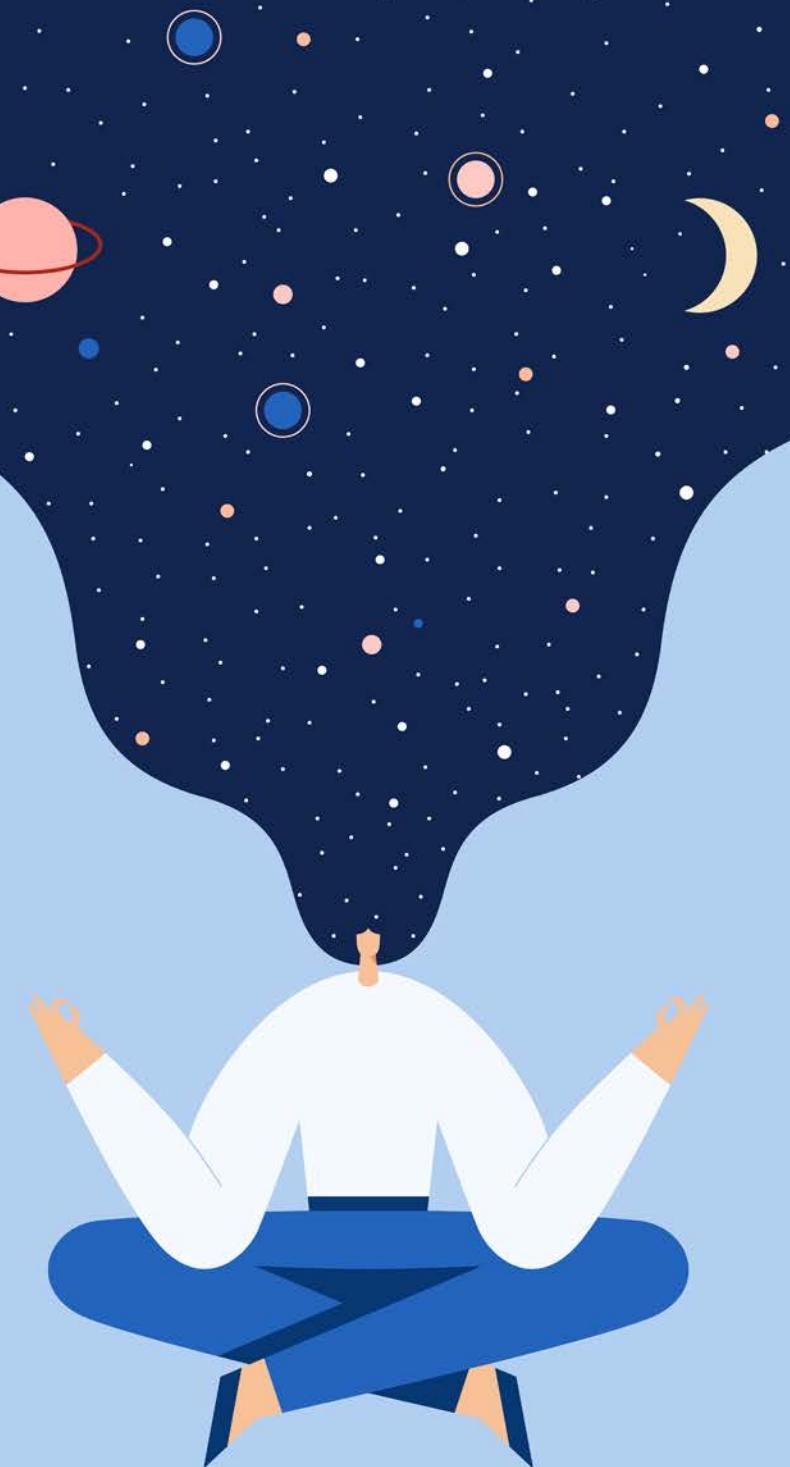
Changing the clocks (which in the beginning was meant to save energy), affects people's circadian rhythm and therefore, their health and rest.

The official time in Spain at present is not the one it should have in according to its geographical location. And what does this mean? For example, in the more westerly regions, such as Galicia, the sun sets at 10 pm in the summer and in the winter it does not rise until 9 am. This causes some curious factors in Spain, which is ruled by Berlin time and not London time. Returning to Galicia, this community is in the same time zone as Warsaw (Poland), which is over 3,200 kilometres away, but the clocks are an hour earlier than in the neighbouring country of Portugal. And all of this causes even more disruptions when, twice a year, the clocks are changed. There are studies certifying that changing the clocks causes imbalances in the organism, mainly alterations in sleep patterns. These are similar to jet lag, although they are not long-lasting.

Now we are about to return to winter time, which is characterised by less time with natural sunlight. The priority during these months will be "to receive as much natural sunlight as possible," Paula García Casanova, a psychologist specialising in sleep from the HLA Group explains. To do this, it is best to be exposed to sunlight for as long as possible. The psychologist also recommends "avoiding wearing sunglasses on the way to work and trying to ensure your workspace is close to a light source, such as a window." In winter, as the sun sets earlier, the segregation of melatonin also starts earlier. "For this reason, it is normal to feel sleepy earlier," she adds. Physical exercise is a good way to beat this.

CIRCADIAN RHYTHMS

The circadian system (from the Latin *circa* which means "around" and *diez* which means "day") allows people to get ahead of the environmental cyclical changes. In this way it guarantees a temporary organisation of the different internal systems. "On the brain level, it works like a clock, therefore it is normal to refer to it as a biological clock," Paula García explains. And like the good clock that it is, it needs us to synchronise ourselves with the environment every day. "We use synchroniser stimuli or zeitgebers to synchronise our



clock with the environment,” she adds. Without any doubt, the most powerful of these is the light-darkness cycle, but there are also others such as social contacts, activity and rest.

Accordingly, changing the clocks means a readjustment of the internal biological clock compared to the external environment and this will require, to a greater or lesser extent, an adaption that could affect the circadian rhythms of the different organic systems, on a hormonal and metabolic level, making falling asleep or managing to remain asleep more difficult. ■



Winter time

In favour

- ▲ As the clocks go back, the population sleeps another hour. This is particularly important for teenagers.
- ▲ It takes less time to adapt to this time change. In general, it usually takes around 3-4 days.
- ▲ The exposure to natural sunlight is matched to the working or school day.
- ▲ Secondary sleep deprivation is reduced to the summer time and to the greater use of leisure time.
- ▲ The body receives fewer hours of sunlight and therefore, it produces a greater segregation of melatonin. That is to say, people rest better and more.

Against

- ▼ As there is less time in natural sunlight available, this has consequences on the synchronisation of the biological clock.
- ▼ Energy is consumed in the evening as it gets dark earlier, rather than in the morning.
- ▼ Older people and children usually suffer most consequences with alterations in their sleeping patterns and rest.
- ▼ Many people have the feeling of being less productive, as there are fewer hours of natural sunlight and the days seem shorter.
- ▼ The lack of natural sunlight at the end of the working day can cause an increase in traffic accidents, as drivers do not have as much visibility.



Paula García Casanova,

a psychologist specialising in sleep from the HLA Group

“A lack of sunlight makes it more difficult to synchronise our biological clocks correctly”

by **Ángela Zorrilla**



Paula García Casanova
graduated in Psychology in 2011. Today she is a psychologist specialising in sleep at the HLA Group.

What are the main sleep problems linked to a lack of sunlight?

Light is the quintessential synchronising stimulus for people's biological clocks. The presence of light tells our brain that it is daytime, while its absence indicates that the time for sleep is approaching. The progressive absence of light from dusk onwards allows the release of melatonin, the sleep hormone. This is also called chemical darkness, and this process opens up the path to sleep.

A lack of sunlight makes it difficult to correctly synchronise our biological clocks with the environment, which can cause problems when trying to fall asleep or remaining asleep, waking up early, sleep deprivation, irritability, dysphoria, sadness, concentration difficulties, memory problems, apathy...

What can we do to ensure that our brains distinguish daytime from night-time?

We need to establish the maximum contrast between both moments using synchronising stimuli to help our biological clocks know when it is day and when it is night.

Are more consultations related to sleep disorders received during the periods when the clocks are

changed?

Not necessarily, but this does not mean that there are no difficulties regarding this point. Fortunately, sleep in general is being talked about more and more, and more specifically, our biological clocks. This helps people to do everything possible to adapt to the clock changes in the right way.

Do some groups suffer more with this change?

The most vulnerable groups when the clocks change are children and the elderly, as their biological clocks have the particularity of having less plasticity regarding change. In these two cases, we must take into account that they will need slightly more time for their biological clocks to synchronise properly with the environmental constraints.

Is it normal to wake up often during the night and even have nightmares during the adaption period to the new time?

Each person adapts to clock changes in their own way. Having said this, waking up often during the night is more understandable than having nightmares. In fact, nightmares are usually linked more to psychological factors such as stress, rather than chronobiologi-



cal questions such as the changes in our biological clocks.

What does quality sleep and rest look like?

The quantity of sleep is habitually talked about rather than its quality. However, the quality is a fundamental parameter because, regardless of the number of hours we sleep, if these are not of quality sleep, we will not feel rested. The quality of the sleep is responsible for the feeling of repairing sleep when waking up. Continuous sleep is linked to suitable sleep quality, while broken sleep will be linked to inadequate sleep. Sleep quality



may be compromised by different reasons. There are different sleep disorders that can affect its quality, such as Obstructive Sleep Apnoea Syndrome, Periodic Limb Movement Syndrome or Restless Legs Syndrome, amongst others.

Furthermore, other disorders such as those related to pain and digestive pathologies, although they are not directly linked to sleep and rest, can also affect and reduce its quality. Finally, there are other factors related to sleep hygiene that are also important to take into account: the temperature of the bedroom; whether it is a noisy room or not; the influence of light

= “In the same way that there are transitions in nature, such as dawn and dusk, our brains need this transition time: a pre-sleep routine is the best way to get to sleep”

or the type and condition of our mattress.

Finally, what is a pre-sleep routine?

The truth is that we do not have a button in our brains that allows us to switch off and make sleep appear instantly. In the same way that there are transitions in nature, such

as the case of dawn and dusk, our brains also need this transition time. And a pre-sleep routine is the ideal element that can help us to get to sleep. It involves behaviours or conducts aimed at helping our brains to get ready to go to sleep.

Obviously, there is no single, standard pre-sleep routine for everyone. Each person has to build their own in terms of their needs and preferences. The only condition that must be met by this type of routine is that it is made up of elements that generate well-being and relaxation for the person, in order to be able to break with the day and welcome a time for rest. ■



“I leave my house at 6.15 am and after crossing the border, I start work at 6 am”

In Europe, almost two million people have to cross a border every day to go to work. At times, such as with the imaginary line between Spain and Portugal, they must also face a time change.

by **Ángela Zorrilla**

40% of the territory of the European Union is formed by border regions. Almost two million so-called cross-border workers live in these areas. Cristina is one of them and she is familiar with the oldest border in Europe, this imaginary line that separates Spain from Portugal, which has been the witness of dozens of daily anecdotes. Known as ‘La Raya’ (The Stripe), this border has two different time zones, making it unique in Europe. Hundreds of people cross this line every day to go to work or to study. Two countries and a difference of one hour which, at times, causes chaos with people’s biological clocks.

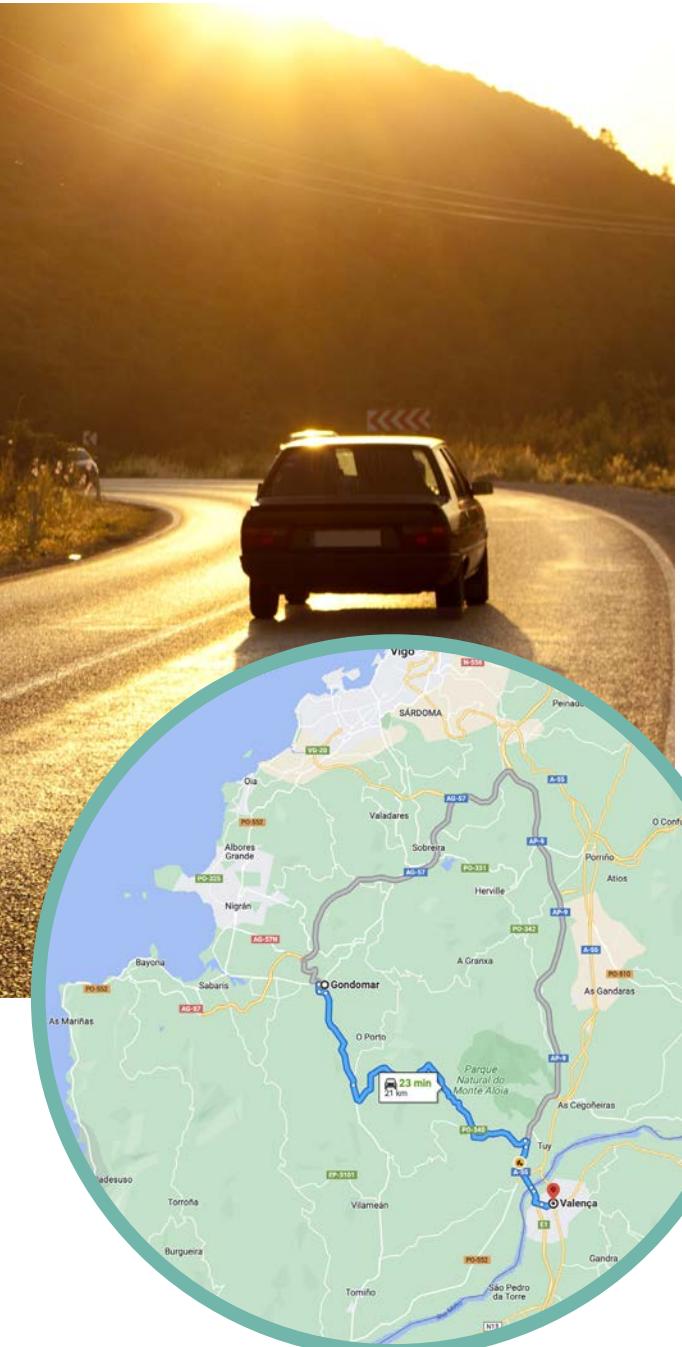
This is the case of Cristina, a 48 year-old Galician cross-border worker who wakes up every day in Spain and works in Portugal. She lives in Gondomar, in the province

of Pontevedra, but she has worked in Portugal for the past two years. Married with two small children, she was made redundant from her job in the automotive industry. In Spain, she was going through hard times “so when I got a call from a Portuguese number in reply to an offer on an online employment portal, I didn’t hesitate,” she recalls. She was unemployed and although “at the beginning the time change made me reticent,” she took the risk. The interview went very well and she was given the job on the spot. “I started working in an automotive company specialising in cables in Valença, just over 21 kilometres from my home. There was just the small fact of it being in a different country,” she explains.

Her working times vary, but she normally works – in Portuguese

= **‘La Raya’ is an invisible border separating Spain and Portugal and it has two different time zones, making it unique in Europe**

time zone, from six in the morning to two in the afternoon. This means she has to keep two clocks under control. The first one makes the alarm clock ring at five o’clock in the morning in Spain. There, she gets everything ready for school for her children, she has breakfast and, an hour later, gets into her car. It is around six o’clock in the morning in Gondomar. “I like to leave with time to spare so I can drive calmly. The road I use is also complicated because many animals cross it.” Thirty minutes later she arrives at work. She starts working at six in the



morning, as well, but in Portugal. In other words, in her home in Galicia, it is now seven o'clock. She is ready to keep her eye on two different times.

This situation is also experienced in other regions that border with Portugal, such as Extremadura. The Extremadura Public Employment Service (SEXPE) launched a cross-border Extremadura-Alen-

Cristina's journey every morning to go from Gondomar to Valença. She arrives before she leaves, but she takes twice as long to get home.

= “I am very happy in my Portuguese company, but I admit that until you adapt to the constant time change, life is slightly chaotic”

Cristina, a cross-border worker

tejo project. According to Nacho Sánchez, a EURES director of the SEXPE, the fact that the border is “much more permeable” must be taken into account along with the fact that public organisations such as the one he represents intermediate “on one part of the cross-border contracts that exist.” In fact, last year this cross-border cooperation between Extremadura and Alentejo (a central-southern region in Portugal), reached agreements for 81 positions in sectors such as “basically construction and farming, followed by the catering and hotel trade, healthcare or in call centres.” Sánchez believes that the difficulty of cross-border jobs lies mainly in the little visibility that they have and not so much on the fact that Spaniards do not accept them. In reality, he explains, “it is easier for a person from Badajoz to travel to Campomaio or Elvas (Portugal) than to Mérida.”

FEAR OF OVERSLEEPING

Cristina is happy in her new job. “I feel very good, but I admit that until you adapt to the time change, life becomes slightly chaotic,” she explains. She carries her telephone with Spanish time on it (which automatically changes when she crosses the border), and a hand-wound watch showing Portuguese time. And the fact is that, in the end, she has to be guided by Portuguese time for most of the day. “To begin with it is difficult. You have to think hard about what time it is in each place and when I started, I was very frightened of oversleeping or making

a mistake. So I slept very badly and this is a very common occurrence.” When she works the morning shift, she only looks at her telephone in her break and this is the only time she has to check her calls, emails from her children’s school or to carry out any personal business. “I have to think what time it really is at home to know whether I can ring at that moment or not,” she states.

This need to constantly corroborate the time also forms part of the daily work at the Extremadura Public Employment Service. “In spite of the fact that companies and administrations are aware of the time change, we always need to check whether a meeting has been arranged at Spanish or Portuguese time and it is difficult to keep it in mind all the time,” Nacho Sánchez explains. On the other hand, Cristina recalls that a few months’ ago she had a training day at her company and she needed to arrive in Portugal slightly earlier. “With all the rushing at home, getting my children’s things ready and the hassle with the different times, I got very stressed. You think you are running very late and you dash off,” she laughs. When she arrived, she realised that she was still on Spanish time and she had an hour’s leeway. “It was a great relief and I enjoyed the extra hour just for me,” she adds. The truth is that these scares and nervousness believing that they are going to arrive late are very normal amongst La Raya cross-border workers. They have a clear conclusion: “Being as close as we are, if we were in the same time zone, it would be much easier for everyone.” ■

4 yoga poses for improved sleep

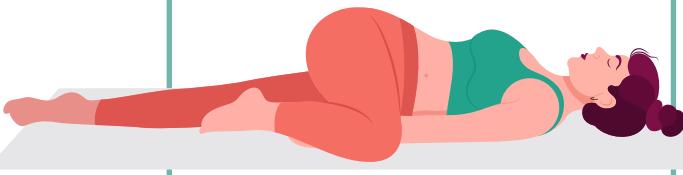
Carrying out some simple stretching sequences before going to bed help you to drift off and guarantee a good night's sleep.

Getting enough rest is essential in order to enjoy physical and mental wellness, but it is impossible to achieve it without sleeping properly. A balanced diet or carrying out physical exercise are not enough for your body to reach this necessary 'reset' feeling'. Deep sleep does guarantee this recuperating effect, but with the changes when the clocks are put back or brought forward, many people find it difficult to fall asleep. The solution for improved sleep involves relaxation be-

fore going to bed, which can be achieved by practicing different techniques such as deep breathing, mindfulness or yoga. And the fact is that practicing some yoga positions for sleep does not only help you to fall asleep, but it also improves the quality of your sleep. Five repetitions of each position, or holding them through deep breathing cycles are enough for our body to respond to the call of relaxation. Once you have performed them, it will be easier to drift off to sleep. ■

Supine spinal twist

Lie down face up with the upper half of the body flat and the arms stretched out, gently bending one leg and then turning towards the side. Following this, change leg and repeat the movements for five minutes. The supine twist helps to balance the body and gently release any tension in the spine. It is a perfect stretch to make you feel more relaxed.



Legs up the wall

Sit close to the wall and raise your legs, leaning them against the wall, with your buttocks as close as possible to the wall. If your hamstrings hurt, you can bend your knees slightly. Remain with your eyes closed for 40 breaths. This restoring position reduces stress and fatigue.



Child's pose

Rest your chest on your thighs, with the arms stretched out in front of you, with the palms facing down and remain still during six slow, deep breaths. This pose helps to become calm and to focus the mind on disconnecting from external distractions.



Corpse pose

Lie down face up with relaxed legs and arms resting by your sides, palms face up. If this is uncomfortable, a small cushion may be put under your knees and head. Let all your body's weight rest in between exhaling with long, deep breaths for five minutes to decrease blood pressure and heart rate. You will reach a complete state of relaxation.





¿Es posible
meter a 4.000
médicos en
46cm²?



Sí y, además,
muy cerca
de ti.



Assistència
Sanitària

LA MILLOR ASSISTÈNCIA
DE LA TEVA VIDA



Brief News



The ASISA Group continues to grow

Lavinia, the sole shareholder in ASISA, held its 46th Meeting in Granada, where it announced an 8.8% increase in its invoicing for 2021.

Lavinia Sociedad Cooperativa, the sole shareholder in ASISA held its 46th Ordinary General Meeting in Granada, where the company's evolution and results were analysed and the main points of its strategy for the next years were reaffirmed. The meeting, held with the slogan "Ganas de crecer" (a desire to grow), reviewed the main areas of activity of the ASISA Group over the last year, which continued to be marked by the impact of the pandemic that significantly affected the healthcare and insurance sectors in which the company operates.

In spite of the impact of the pandemic, the ASISA Group closed the year 2021 with a consolidated invoicing of 1,567.9 million euros - 8.8% more than in 2020. "In 2021, we have achieved some reasonable results that have allowed us to speed up strategic investments for our Group and to continue developing our strategic plan, which has growth as its essential goal," Doctor Francisco Ivorra, chairman of the ASISA Group emphasised. To

46th meeting (from left to right): Dr. Gregorio Medina, vice-chairman of ASISA-Lavinia; Dr. Enrique de Porres, CEO of ASISA; Indalecio Sánchez-Montesinos, Government delegate from the Andalusian Government in Granada; Dr. Francisco Ivorra, chairman of ASISA-Lavinia; Dr. Antonia Solvas, secretary of the Governing Council of Lavinia-ASISA and Dr. Francisco Anguita, during the opening ceremony of the 46th general meeting of Lavinia S.Coop.

move forward towards this goal of sustained growth, the ASISA Group will continue developing its strategic plan, supported by five important pillars: advancing in the development of its multi-branch insurance offer; strengthening its own care network; increasing its international presence; speeding up its digital transformation process and consolidating its commitment to sustainability.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE NETWORK

The recorded growth has allowed the ASISA Group to continue developing the second pillar of its strategy: strengthening its own care network, led by the HLA Hospital Group.

In 2021, the care companies belonging to the ASISA Group invoiced 534.8 million euros - 15.9% more than in 2020. In this same period, the ASISA Group destined 60.5 million euros to investments, mainly to the development and modernisation of its own care network. ■

● Promotion of students.

Fundacion ASISA, the HLA University Hospital Moncloa and the Universidad Europea de Madrid (UEM) celebrated the graduation event for the sixth promotion of doctors trained at the hospital centre of the HLA Group. The 24 Health Sciences students from the UEM took their Hippocratic Oath in the presence of Elena Gazapo Carretero, Rector of the UEM and Doctor Enrique de Porres, CEO of ASISA, amongst other personalities.



● A gesture with the support of Fundacion ASISA.

The swimmer from Alicante, Jorge Crivillés managed to swim across the Bristol Channel in a charity challenge in favour of AEAL and GEPAC cancer patients that was sponsored by the Fundacion ASISA. With this new challenge completed, Crivillés has become the first Spaniard and the fourth athlete in the world to complete the Original Triple Crown, a set of tests that includes another two that he had previously completed: the English Channel (2012) and the North Channel (2019). Crivillés swam almost 50 kilometres in less than 10 hours where he faced the second highest tide range in the world.

The HLA Group will invest 24 million euros in a new medical-surgical centre in Seville

The new HLA Ramón y Cajal Centre will offer surgical and outpatient services and it will be up and running at the end of the year.

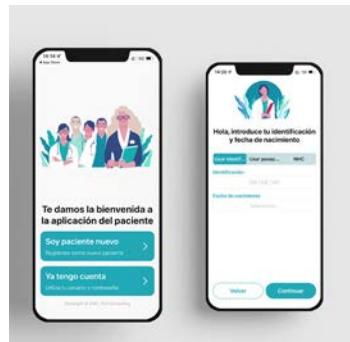
The HLA Group has started the development of a new medical-surgical centre in Seville. The company will invest 24 million euros in this centre, which will have around thirty multi-speciality consulting rooms and four state-of-the-art operating theatres that will allow top quality care to be offered, based on the development of the latest diagnosis and treatment techniques.

The centre, located at Avenida Ramón y Cajal (31 and 35) and that is in a refurbishment and adaptation phase, will be called HLA Ramón y Cajal and it will be up and running in the last quarter of the year. Its installations will cover over 4,400 square metres, in



addition to a car park integrated into the building's basement, with 120 parking spaces for the centre's patients and professionals. HLA Ramón y Cajal will house different consulting rooms and specialised units, amongst them, a Radiodiagnostics Unit, which will have the latest image diagnosis techniques, as well as the support of multidisciplinary teams, aimed at offering comprehensive care for patients. ■

The new HLA Ramón y Cajal medical-surgical centre will be up and running in the last quarter of the year and it is added to the other three HLA centres in the province of Seville.



New app for HLA Group patients

The HLA Hospital Group has taken another step forward in its digital transformation process aimed at making healthcare easier for its patients. The company has developed a new version of its application for mobile devices, which is already available for iOS and Android operating systems.

The application improves the experience and simplifies administrative formalities, such as consulting discharge reports or test results, appointment management and modification of information without having to visit the centre. Likewise, it aids and speeds up the identification and registration process for the arrival of patients at the centres, which reduces waiting time at the admission desks. ■

Tribute to doctor Diego Lorenzo with music by the Escuela Superior de Música Reina Sofía



Nearly three hundred people came together at the Teatro Romea to listen to the music by the Escuela Superior de Música Reina Sofía and to pay tribute to Dr. Diego Lorenzo.

The Fundacion ASISA celebrated a concert by the Escuela Superior de Música Reina Sofía in Murcia, which took place in the Teatro Romea and paid tribute to Doctor Diego Lorenzo, the former vice-chairman of Lavinia-ASISA and former delegate of the company in the Region of Murcia. The recital was used to acknowledge the work developed by Doctor Diego Lorenzo over almost fifty years aimed at consolidating healthcare cooperativism and developing ASISA and its group of companies, as well as making the company into a leader in health insurance and private healthcare. ■

National Creativity Award

ASISA received the national Creativity Award 2022 in the gold category for campaign crafting for the drafting of its campaign "Tranquilidad mental y emocional" (Mental and emotional calmness), formed by the pieces "Doubt," "Shedding of sadness" and "The mirror of the soul", three illustrated mini-stories. ASISA's Advertising Manager, Carlos Eiroa and the team at Wunderman Thomson, received the National Creativity Prize at the gala held in The Kursaal in San Sebastian. ■



Assistència Sanitària has awarded 35 scholarships and a 'prosalud' prize

This aid is aimed at the continuous improvement of professionals and the Ramon de Tserach 2022 award goes to a cancer project in Uganda.

For the fourteenth year running, Assistència Sanitària and its scholarship programme for healthcare professionals has renewed its commitment to training in the health field. Over the 2021-22 academic year it received 278 applications which, after the selection process, have been converted into aid for a value of 29,985 euros given to 35 master or postgraduate students in the health field.

As Dr. Ignacio Orce, the chairman of Assistència Sanitària emphasised during the diploma ceremony, "the initiative arose from the wish to promote the up-dating of knowledge of healthcare workers as a contribution to an improvement in the health system, but also as a special acknowledgement to the profession, an essential task for good medical care

that is often not appreciated socially. From all the points of view, the result of these fourteen editions is positive: 3,758 applications have been received; 434 scholarships have been awarded and around 410,000 euros handed out."

Additionally, aimed at acknowledging the civic action for health promotion, the supportive project presented by the Idiwaka Association (NGO Fundacion Africa Directo) received from Dr. Josep M. Llobet, secretary of the board of Assistència Sanitària the Ramon de Tserach 2022 prize, created by the Medical Sciences Academic of Catalonia and the Balearic Islands in 1989, aimed at acknowledging the activity which, in favour of health promotion, has been developed by a non-profit making civic body. ■

Assistència Sanitària wants to guarantee the best training for doctors, nurses and other people who look after citizens' health.

Brief News

● **Assistència Sanitària and SCIAS** have published their corporate reports as a compendium of the enormous activity by both institutions, corresponding to 2021. The two reports - which are already available in digital version and of which have been published in two carefully edited versions in Castilian Spanish and Catalan, include in depth articles on all sorts of subjects, as well as the most outstanding figures relative to the services provided by the insurance company or the most relevant achievements by the state-of-the-art services at the Hospital de Barcelona.



● **Medical seminars at SCIAS.** The Hospital de Barcelona has once again started hosting different work seminars for professionals now that the restrictions caused by Covid-19 have been lifted. The 6th Seminar on Orthopaedic Surgery and Traumatology and the 10th Seminar on Pregnancy Pathology have both been held. Additionally, on the 17th of June, the Hospital de Barcelona hosted a Seminar on Care Quality for the first time.

Awards for medical excellence and management

Marta Sans, the economic and financial manager of SCIAS Hospital de Barcelona, has been acknowledged with the prize given by the Association of Business Financiers (ASSET) in its category of the Best Financial Management 2022. At an event held in June, where she was accompanied by the chairwoman of SCIAS, M^a Ángels Font, the award pla-

ced value on her work when implanting steps for information, protection, logistic support, economy and gratification during the crisis caused by Covid-19. Furthermore, the Catalan Paediatric Association acknowledged the Paediatrics and Neonatology Service at the Hospital de Barcelona with the award for the Best Presentation of Infectious Diseases. ■

SCIAS holds its Ordinary General Meeting

M. Àngels Font, the chairwoman of the organisation led the meeting, which has now gone back to being in-person again.

On the 11th of June SCIAS' Ordinary General Meeting took place in Barcelona, attended by the same amount of people as the previous year, who form part of the cooperative and give meaning to the healthcare cooperativism model of which it is a prime example. Prior to this, at preparatory assemblies, members chose delegates and established the appropriate preliminary agreements according to the corresponding demarcations and sectors.

Led by the chairwoman of the cooperative, M. Àngels Font, the assembly is mainly used to evalua-



te the overall management, distribute surplus, approve the annual accounts, agree on capital contributions, choose the members of the Governing Council and other organs and, if such is the case, modify the articles of association or different regulations of the organisation. It is, therefore, SCIAS' top governing body, although it does not have an executive nature. ■

The meeting once again took place in-person, as restrictions have now been lifted.

The Hospital de Barcelona continues with the refurbishment of its installations

Following the plan, the comprehensive refurbishment of the Emergency and Accident Service and of the Admissions Area has recently come into operation. This refurbishment goes beyond intervening in the spaces and it has reorganised and restructured these areas to offer a service that is adapted to the current needs of its users.

In this way, a fast circuit has been created for patients with uncomplicated pathologies that reduces waiting times, avoiding delays when dealing with patients suffering from more serious ailments. Likewise, as occurred in the refurbishment of the Oncology Service, informative screens have been installed that notify patients and family members using an alphanumerical code, which help to conserve confidentiality. The main stairs of the building have also been modified due to the changes in fire prevention regulations. In all, four of the Hospital de Barcelona's seventeen floors have been refurbished, adapting them to the new requirements and carrying out a complete modernisation of the lift lobby, adjacent to the stairs. ■

The medical checkups of all the new signings for FC Barcelona



Assistència Sanitària is FC Barcelona's medical partner, and therefore it is in charge of verifying the players' fitness and ruling out risk factors by carrying out medical tests before signing the new contracts. This summer, signings such as Lewandowski, Rapinha, Nuria Rábano (seen here in the above photo) or Nikola Kalinic, as well as other athletes who are back from their holidays, have passed through Assistència Sanitària's installations and the Hospital de Barcelona to be subjected to all kinds of controls and to guarantee their performance before being officially presented. ■





The distinguishing role of cooperatives in the health sector

A new report by IHCO illustrates the many ways in which cooperatives make a difference in reaching the Sustainable Development Goal No. 3, Good Health and Well-being.



A clinic near Melbourne that provides services for the Aborigine community, a pharmacist from Salonika who is over 90 years of age or a Belgian computer technician who designs digital solutions for the management of healthcare installations are some of the experiences included in the *Cooperatives in the health sector* study.

Recently published by the International Healthcare Cooperatives Organisation, the research sets forth the role played by cooperative companies in the healthcare sector and the differentiating value they provide compared to other organisational or business structures. To respond to these questions, over 200 cooperatives with activities linked to the health

system in over 40 countries were analysed.

The report indicates the suitability of cooperative companies in activities such as primary or specialised care, management of hospitals and care facilities, health insurance or the provision of medical and social services. There are also examples in healthcare training and educational areas. Another industrial sector where they stand out is the pharmaceutical industry, with consolidated initiatives in the production and distribution of medicines.

Cooperatives are group-owned companies that are governed democratically. They need to be efficient to meet the economic and social needs of the coopera-

**HEALTH
COOP**



Download the report by the International Healthcare Cooperatives Association [here](#).

tive members, but they act on the market in accordance with a set of their own distinctive values.

These distinguishing characteristics make cooperatives into a highly suitable for providing people-orientated, high quality healthcare services.

In the study they analysed in depth 12 case studies that are representative of the different solutions that cooperatives provide for the current challenges being faced by health systems. Finally, they proposed a series of recommendations to ensure the full development of their potential and called for the development of public policies aimed at promoting them and a legislation that respects and recognises their particular nature. ■

Over 800 million euros to boost the social economy

The 'PERTE' increases the importance of the social economy in the GDP by 1% and it involves twelve ministries.

The cabinet has approved the Strategic Project for Economic Recovery and Transformation (PERTE in its Spanish initials) of the Social and Care Economy in which a total of 808 million euros will be invested over the 2022-2026 period.

The initiative, which is using the Next Generation European Funds, has a transversal nature and it 12 ministries are involved in its development, aimed at generating policies that promote the expansion of the social economy in all the production sectors.

According to the Spanish Confederation of Social Economy Companies (CEPES in its Spanish initials), the project will increase the importance of the social economy that already currently contributes 10% to the national GDP by 1%, representing over 43,000 companies



and it will generate over 2.5 million jobs. The employers' associations consider that it is going to be an essential instrument to ensure the social economy leads new emerging sectors that generate quality employment and transforming projects that respond to the challenges of depopulation. In the care economy field, it seeks to strengthen and pro-

fessionalise the services with improvements in infrastructures and equipping them with technological tools and training programmes.

A third goal, mainly strategic, is the creation of a state-of-the-art hub that seeks to be a European benchmark in knowledge management from the Spanish social economy bodies. ■

The Second Vice-President and Minister of Work and Social Economy, Yolanda Díaz intervened in the presentation, alongside the chairman of CEPES, Juan Antonio Pedreño, amongst other personalities.

Carlos Zarco, a new director of the International Cooperative Alliance



Dr. Carlos Zarco, the General Manager of the Fundación Espriu, has been elected as a director of the board of directors of the International Cooperative Alliance. His appointment took place during the assembly that the international organism held in Seville in June of this year within the framework of the International Cooperative Gathering. The assembly, at which 246 entities from 81 different countries were represented, renewed its support for the Argentinean Ariel Guarco as the Chairman for the next four years. As the representative of

international healthcare cooperativism, Dr. Zarco takes on this new responsibility with the aim of promoting the Alliance's growth and developing its influence and representation capacity in the international organisms and decision-making centres.

The International Cooperative Alliance, founded in 1895, is the organism that brings together and represents 310 cooperative organizations in 110 countries, providing a global voice and a coordinated action for the 3 million cooperative companies existing in the world. ■



How do cities directly affect our health?

Pollution, noise, excess heat and lack of green spaces have a direct effect on our health and quality of life, in addition to being social and economic determinants.

by **Pilar Maurell**

Our postcode affects our health more than our genetic code. A new trend in town planners and architects are already aware of this and are seeking out ways to turn cities into spaces that are slightly healthier.

These professionals include people such as Marta Rofín, the Academic Director of the postgraduate degree course in Town Planning and Health at the Universidad Politécnica de Catalunya, and the Coordinator from the City Council of Vic (Barcelona) for the network

of cities in URBACT, the European Healthy Cities project.

She acknowledges that the link between city and health has not been taken into account until recently and there is still a long way to go.

“Public policies emphasise motivating active mobility, but many medium-sized cities (which are the large majority), do not have prepared pavements, shady areas or places to sit down,” according to Marta Rofín. The location of sports facilities, for example, which are usually found in the suburbs, should also be taken into account. “All of this

makes an impact on the decisions made by people to carry out a healthy life style,” she explains.

For the expert, “there are different aspects of a city that affect physical health, but these can also impinge on mental and environmental health,” in such a way that the concept of health is understood in a “holistic way”. The same message is being given from the World Health Organisation, which affirms that being healthy does not involve just not being ill, but rather it is a complete state of well-being. “From this point of view, we are talking about



the quality of life and the city and the environment in which we move having a significant effect on us.”

Because it is estimated that “only 20% of health depends on the healthcare system, while the remaining determining factors might be social, economic and above all, environmental.”

The expert recalls that in the 19th century there was a hygienist trend in town planning and large open spaces were created such as the Ensanche de Ildefonso Cerdá, in Barcelona; the Plan Haussman, in Paris or the so-called ‘garden cities’. “The idea was to prevent the transmission of diseases, creating wide-open spaces where the air could circulate. This is not the case now, but we must encourage quality of life, well-being and the interaction amongst citizens.”

SURROUNDINGS AS AN EXCLUSION POINT

This quality of life and well-being must reach all districts. “The social and economic constraints greatly determine the lifestyle we lead. In terms of our income, we

have more or less free time or we interact more and we have access to a certain type of spaces,” according to Rofin. In fact, she and her team carried out a study where they analysed some scientific studies published from 2015 onwards in which a clear link between the environment where we live and health is shown. “We reached the conclusion that there are a series of elements such as population density, mixture of uses, access to green spaces and housing or mobility” that are related to health.

In Paris, the Mayoress Anne Hi-

» **Population density, mixture of uses, access to green spaces and to housing or mobility are linked to health**

dalgo made the concept of the 15 minute city popular. It is this mixture of uses referred to by Rofin, “that allows you to have access to shops, work and leisure just 15 minutes from where you live.” Walking through and seeing green spaces is another of the keystones to guarantee citizens’ well-being. “But the location ►►

Productive cities versus caring cities

Cities are places aimed at productivity, according to the architect Izaskun Chincilla in her book ‘La ciudad de los cuidados’ (The caring city) (Catarata). And by putting productive activities at the heart of the matter, citizens’ needs have been neglected, turning them into “individuals who contribute to the productivity”. The biological and subjective characteristics are not considered by politicians when they govern or legislate, meaning that older people, those with impaired sight or who do not react well to stress for example, get left behind.

“Our cities are a hostile setting for activities not linked to productivity: trying to sleep a little, using a service, drinking clean water without paying for it, breathing unpolluted air, having fun without consuming or walking without getting wet on a rainy day form great challenges in today’s cities,” according to Chinchilla, a professor in Practical Architectonics at the Bartlett School of Architecture (London).



»» In Spain, men's life expectancy is 80 years and women's, 85, but in both cases, we experience 70 years of quality of life. And one of the most problematic elements is noise.”

»» is also a determining factor, because it is not the same having a green belt around the city where you can go on Sundays, than having green spaces in all the districts, in all possible ways, in small spaces, roofs or façades.” Not just access to these small spots of nature must be guaranteed, but also “the continuity of this green infrastructure,” which encourages biodiversity and healthy mobility.

The expert recalls that there are many scientific studies that affirm that people carry out more sport if we have a green space nearby and we put greater value on our social life. Additionally, green spaces allow cities to be more resilient against global warming, because they regulate the temperature, preventing the so-called islands of heat and they filter the rain water when there are heavy storms. They also mitigate acoustic pollution.

“In Spain, men's life expectancy is 80 years and women's, 85, but in both cases, we experience 70 years with quality of life. And one of the most problematic elements is noise, which prevents you from sleeping well and causes discomfort or anxiety, in such a way that incorporating elements in the cities that mitigate this noise is not a trivial factor.”

A GREEN SOCIAL PRESCRIPTION

It has also been scientifically proven that in schools where there are green spaces, the pupils study better than in others where these areas are missing, and “that patients in hospitals with views of green spaces get better 20% faster,” Roffin affirms, who states that 70% of the population over the age of 60 years take psychotropic drugs. This is the reason behind the move forward in steps to improve emotional well-being that does not include the prescription of drugs and for other solutions are to be sought, such as the green social prescription that is already being implemented in some Spanish cities.

“Instead of pills, patients are prescribed a social activity, but



for this to work, it is important for the city to be prepared” and for the person in question to be able to get to the community centre or to a bowling green, and that this is not in full sunlight and that there are benches. “Many older people plan their outings in terms of the benches where they can sit down,” the expert explains. “To the extent that the decision of where to put a bench is important, when drafting a town planning project. We are influencing people’s mobility, in their daily routines. There are many elements in the urban surroundings that condition people’s lives and we can do a great deal more than we think,” she adds.

REFLECTIONS FROM THE PANDEMIC

The Covid-19 pandemic we have lived through over the past two years has made each of us think, both individually and as a society, about the places where we live. “It was a moment of reflection and many articles were written about the elements around us that prevented us from living the life we wanted, for example, how important it is to have a bal-

cony in the home or have access to the rooftop,” Rofín indicates, “or the significance of having a park nearby for practicing sport or playing with the children.” The “Mediterranean mixed city” was highly valued, where everything is nearby, compared to residential areas, for example, which take up large areas of land and where there are no services.

Thanks to Covid-19, the expert from the UPC affirms, “we realised the importance of being able to walk around the city and to have natural spaces and paths where we can stroll at the weekends, well-communicated with the city and accessible on foot, by bicycle or by public transport.” The pandemic also made us more aware of our health and “that this depended on other people; that this was all linked up”. ■

» We realised the importance of being able to walk around the city and having natural spaces and paths where we can stroll at the weekends, well-communicated and accessible.”

Initiatives to improve our surroundings

The World Economic Forum launched the ‘BiodiverCiudades’ (BiodiverCities) Challenge to seek out innovative solutions in the large cities. Amongst the most prominent solutions are BitaGreen, which is developing software with maps that identify how urban green spaces help to reduce floods; or Amsterdam’s Resilio project to face up to the climate challenges in cities. Other initiatives include Hot Heart, which attempts to cover the carbon-free heating needs in Helsinki, with a cost that is 10% lower than at present; the Idas Valley Community, in Cape Town (South Africa), which creates employment opportunities promoting open-air recreational activities, recovering the native vegetation and preserving the natural environment. The Swiss Sustainable Districts Association also stands out, which designs sustainable districts that are environmentally-friendly and that respect the well-being of their inhabitants.



62% of the European population lives in areas with few green spaces

Public green spaces accessible for walking, cycling, playing and carrying out other open-air activities can encourage safe mobility and access to the basic services for women, older people and children, as well as for low-income demographic groups, which would improve equality on the subject of health,” Nathalie Röbbel, an official tech-

nical officer in the Department of Public Health, Environmental and Social Determinants at the World Health Organisation, indicates in an article.

At ISGlobal, they also emphasising the benefits of green spaces. They analysed over a thousand cities from 31 European countries and they discovered that

up to 43,000 premature deaths could be prevented every year if the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) recommendations were met, indicating that there should be a green space covering at least 0.5 hectares at a distance of no more than 300 metres in a straight line from each home. The results published in ‘The Lancet Planetary Health’ confirm that 62% of the European population lives in areas with fewer green spaces than recommended.

RESILIENT AND HEALTHY

In her book, ‘La ciudad de los cuidados’ (The caring city), the architect Izaskun Chinchilla proposes that the areas recovered from the vehicular traffic thanks to the low emission areas, should be used for green spaces. This would allow cities to be more resilient to climate change and would improve the quality of their air, as the trees would capture the carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, contributing to contain rainwater runoff and help to mitigate the heat island effect. Also, according to the architect, exposure to tree-covered areas “reduces blood pressure, stimulates the immune system and improves the general feeling of well-being.” ■

Sharing public spaces for emotional well-being

We are social beings and at times, cities isolate us. Socialisation spaces are also important for citizens’ mental health. The ‘Guía para planificar ciudades saludables’ (Guide for planning healthy cities) published by the Spanish Healthy Cities Network, points out that one of the basic strategic lines “is the creation and promotion of spaces for coexistence, creating cities and districts that are more supportive and less unequal.”

To do this, they propose creating meeting spaces in buildings to share knowledge and experiences; and green spaces, squares or parks, as well as open sports areas in public spaces with elements that allow people to sit and encourage conversation, such as small auditoriums with stands where people can sit; spaces where young people can do sports, such as skateboarding or roller skating; or squares with fountains that can be used for playing in the summertime. ■





Valencia is the healthiest city in the world

Vitoria, in the Basque Country, is the only Spanish city that has obtained the European Commission's Green Capital stamp. This badge recognises the cities that take greatest care of the environment and the living surroundings of their inhabitants. Access to green spaces, reduction in light pollution, decrease in water consumption and protection of their biodiversity were some of the reasons for the award, granted in 2012. Other cities holding the same stamp are Essen in Germany, Stockholm, the Swedish capital city or Nantes in France.

But according to the English organisation 'Money', a healthy city goes beyond just its green spaces. This organisation also emphasises life expectancy, safety or the healthcare quality. According to its latest list, Valencia holds the first place as the healthiest city in the world, due to its life expectancy figures, social connection, hours of sunlight and low pollution rates. In second place is Madrid, due to its green spaces such as the Retiro Park, the Casa de Campo, the Capricho Park and the quality of its healthcare; and the third place is held by Canberra, in Australia, known for being a city with 100% renewable energy and its low air pollution rates. Money also highlights Lisbon, Tokyo, Zurich and Vienna amongst the healthiest cities in the world. ■

Traffic causes 80% of the noise in cities

According to the 2015 Paris Agreements, next year 145 Spanish cities of over 50,000 inhabitants will have to enable areas of low emissions proportional to the size of their population. There are many benefits involved in this initiative and they have a significant effect on our physical and mental health. According to Izaskun Chinchilla in her book 'La ciudad de los cuidados' (The caring city) (Catarata), this will encourage a more efficient energy consumption and less dependence on petrol and it will also reduce pollution, which causes nine million premature deaths in the world per year according to 'The Lancet'.

Additionally, the urban surface area devoted to other uses that are not traffic and parking will increase. The author recalls that private vehicles remain stationary 90% of the day and they also form the means of transport that occupies most space when travelling (90 times more than if the same journey is using the underground railway).

Traffic is responsible for 80% of the noise in cities and according to European Union data: two out of three residents in medium-sized or large Spanish cities live in noise environments that are considered to be unacceptable. In the short term, exposure to these noise levels causes discomfort, communication problems and sleep disorders, while in the long term, it generates insomnia, heart diseases, depression or irritability. ■



Marcelle Mardon, a Zimbabwean architect who represents the Dialogue on Shelter organisation

“We work to get basic services from a gender point of view”

The platform creates savings cooperatives amongst women from the slums of Masvingo, Zimbabwe, to empower them and to build basic infrastructures.

by **Pilar Maurell**

Marcelle Mardon is a Zimbabwean architect and town planner with over 20 years of experience, committed to women's rights in urban environments. She forms part of the MIT SIS of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, a group of multidisciplinary investigators devoted to researching and defending slums in southern countries. In recent years she has been working in Bilbao, representing the Dialogue on Shelter organisation, in order to obtain funds for projects in Africa.

What is Dialogue on Shelter?

It is a non-governmental organisation of town planners and architects that acts as a bridge between the institutions that make policies about how cities should be and the community-based organisations of people who live in the slums. These are vulnerable people who are trying to come together and take action in order to achieve improvements or to become agents for change for their own well-being. We work to get very basic services, from a gender point of view.

You are now in the city of Masvingo (Zimbabwe). What are you doing there?



Marcelle Mardon
An architect with over 20 years' experience, she is passionate about the participative design processes fostered by town planning and particularly, those with a gender view point. She works to improved the living and financial conditions of slum-dwellers in African cities.

In 2050, 68% of the world population will live in cities. This will also be the case in Africa. Additionally, Africa is the continent where the cities and the population are growing most. Today, more and more people are coming to the large cities and the infrastructures cannot adapt to this. In these countries, the urban plans and the planning policies of the cities remain the same as they were during the colonial period, and the slums that have been growing up in reality do not exist on paper. We cannot have so many people living in places that are not officially considered as areas developed for urbanism. Another problem is poverty, specifically in Zimbabwe many people have to leave the centre of the city to find a cheaper place to sleep.

How do you work?

Dialogue on Shelter is an organisation that supports the Zimbabwe Homeless People's Federation and we use a methodology developed in India under an umbrella entity called Slum Dwellers International. There are other people in Africa working with the same method and we act as a network, learning from each other. We focus on women's empowerment, using savings groups led by women in

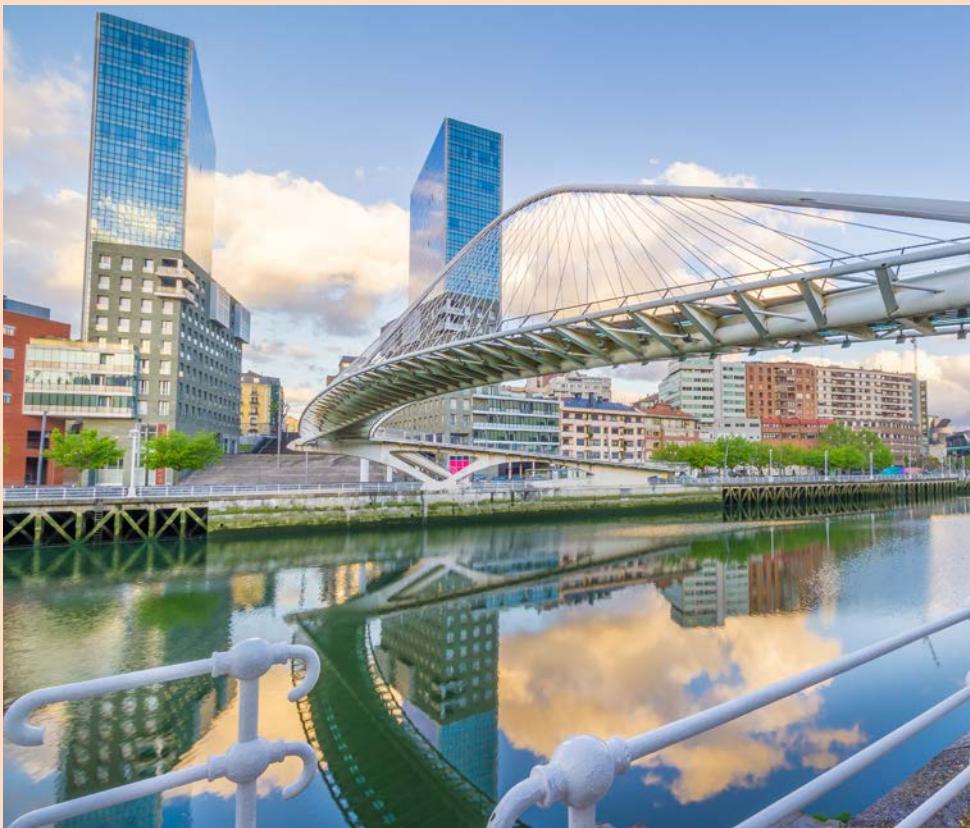
order to put them at the centre of everything. The groups meet up every week and the women decide on the priorities for their needs. They save money to be able to improve the infrastructures of their districts and we talk to the institutions in order for them to realise that it is a good idea to improve these districts, working together. That is to say, we look for funding through savings cooperatives and town councils. If the councils have no money, they collaborate with permits, land, technical knowledge or whatever they can. Additionally, we work learning in a network and the cities that have developed initiatives that work come to visit us or we go there with representatives from the institutions to show them what they can do in their own cities.

How is Bilbao City Council collaborating with you?

Over the past four years in Bilbao, we have received funding from the City Council and we have started a dialogue between the community and the council to organise a strategy in Masvingo.

Does the key lie in work in the community?

Our basic principles are very similar to those used in cooperatives.



We have federations that involve different groups that we bring together to carry out actions and to be able to do more things: we support the creation of businesses; we install improvements in water supply piping, sewage or accommodation. Everything that is necessary for living decently. The actions also go beyond the members of the federations and affect the district in general. Thanks to the project we are collaborating with the Bilbao City Council, we will reach over 20,000 people from two communities.

What are the advantages of working with women?

Women handle money better and when they control it, we generate a situation of equality in the communities. The groups go further than just saving money, the women learn about leadership, accounting, how to do business or acquiring the skills needed to dialogue with the institutions. In the end, they obtain the ownership of the land, which is the main objective, ensu-

» Thanks to the project we are collaborating on with the Bilbao City Council, we will reach over 20,000 people in two communities”

ring that they can sign and put their names on the contracts, because generally, this is not the case: in traditional families the man holds the leading role. There are other reasons for working with the women and the fact is that there are a large percentage of women who live in cities and who are the heads of the family. AIDS caused havoc in Zimbabwe and there are many women on their own. Additionally, there are an increasing amount of single women who come to the cities to escape restricting traditions or to look for work.

What have you achieved with your work in Masvingo?

Thanks to the collaboration with Bilbao we have carried out some preliminary water and sewage pro-

jects. We have also taken professionals from the University to Masvingo to start designing improvements in the homes. Every year we have taken a new step towards improving the slums. Now we are already talking about the city's overall future, because these poorest communities also form an important part in the development and planning of the cities. And we are doing this through platforms formed by representatives of all the agents: institutions, NGOs, associations and representatives from these communities.

What are the basic deficiencies?

Above all, the sewage network. There is just one lavatory for 50 people and this is terrible, particularly for the women and children. Often they have to go to the bathroom at night with their mobile telephone as there is no light or at times they are attacked. I think that it is important that we have managed to introduce this gender view and open up this discourse regarding planning aimed specifically at women.

Is it important to include the gender component in town planning?

Without any doubt. It is to ensure that the women can make decisions about their own specific needs and those of their daughters in their own environment, needs, which in general are not even considered. You have to talk to them to find out what is happening: that the water is too far away, the lavatories, which are very dirty, that there is little water and they have to get up at four o'clock in the morning... If you don't talk to them about the challenges that these women face and they have no voice, we will continue to design things in the same way as before, on a city scale, because we are not talking about disperse pilot schemes, but rather an overall strategy that is going to benefit everyone. ■



After the volcano LA PALMA

A year after the volcano erupted, turning the small Canary Island into the centre of attention for the entire planet, the spectacular lava streams have started their cooling process, revealing a landscape that is more surprising than ever. It is time to return to the 'Isla Bonita'.

by **Neus Duran**

We all learnt at school that the Canary Islands are volcanic, a fact that the tourism pamphlets remind us of, but many of us were not really aware of this until witnessing the violent eruption which, a year ago, made La Palma the centre of attention around the world. The spectacular images of the island that had been turned into a hypnotic underworld kept people glued to their screens all over the world until officially at Christmas, the phenomenon was taken as terminated and the cooling phase of the lava streams started.

The new landscape has become another attraction of what is

known as the 'Isla Bonita' and now is the perfect time to discover the attractions that this small paradisiacal Atlantic island hides.

With an intense, overwhelming smell of pine trees; a landscape in shades of black, ochre and reds; lush laurel forests; deep, steep ravines and an imposing coast of high cliffs, it is a destination without any traffic or parking problems that invites you to submerge yourself in its wild nature and in its relaxed rhythm and forget the rest of the world for a few days.

Hiking and cycling routes to discover its charming little villages, or diving in its cave-filled crystal-clear waters are just some

of the possibilities offered by this island, which is a Biosphere Reserve. You really must enjoy one of its spectacular black-sand beaches and its solitary volcanic covers and of course, have a really unique swim in one of its natural swimming pools, such as La Fajana (Barlovento) or Charco Azul (San Andrés y Sauces).

From La Palma straight to heaven

Without any doubt, one of the factors that make this into a unique destination is its magnificent night sky. With good reason it was acknowledged as the First Starlight Reserve in the world, a prestigious label that is given to the best places around the globe for stargazing.

This extraordinary visibility is due, to a large extent, to the fact that over half of its territory is covered by one kind or other of environmental protection. This is the case of La Caldera National Park in Taburiente, which arose from a geological formation process millions of years ago, in which many microclimates exist together, with significantly contrasting vegetation. At its highest point, around 2,400 m, and above the



The natural swimming pool at La Fajana (left) is a real paradise where you can enjoy a wild swim. In the pictures above, the viewing point at Roque de los Muchachos; the Astrophysical Observatory, one of the most important in the world; and the Poris de Candelarias, an impressive cave carved in the rock.



A unique experience

Not many people can boast of observing the landscape that has arisen from the ashes of the eruption of a volcano firsthand. Few of the people travelling to La Palma this year leave without taking advantage of this unique opportunity to observe the new landscape. The authorities and tourism and adventure companies have established a series of proposals to do this with complete safety. Travellers can discover it through guided and authorized group visits with any of the companies sanctioned to do this, such as La Palma Natural, Graja Tours or La Palma Transfer and Tours. To obtain a panoramic view of the volcano's lava streams and learn more on the subject, the volcanic Cavities Interpretation Centre "Caños de Fuego" can be visited. This is an information centre that has an exhibition area, audiovisuals and in the surrounding area it has a system of floating catwalks that give access to the floating glass viewing point and the Volcanic Tube 'Cueva de las Palomas'. The new volcano can also be observed from El Tendal Archaeological Park, which is located in an enormous natural cave where around twenty 'Bennahoarites' (natives of La Palma) lived for at least a thousand years. Other observation points are the Fátima Monument, the Plaza Iglesia de Tajuya or the Port of Tazacorte.

so-called 'sea of clouds', the Roque de Los Muchachos Observatory is sited, one of the most important in the world, which includes guided visits. In addition to the observatory, the entire island invites visitors to enjoy the stars. From hotels and rural tourism accommodation, which usually have basic instruments for stargazing, to companies that offer Astronomical Tours with specialised guides. The offer also includes night-time photography routes, thematic walks that bring together wine and stars and moonlight trips. Hiking fans will also find four paths signed with elements linked to the stars. Even some restaurants have succumbed to this star fever and have christened their dishes with the names of constellations.

Those who wish to find out more about the local culture can devote a few hours to one of the small exhibition centres in La Palma, such as the Island Museum, which concentrates on Nature, Fine Art and Ethnography, or the curious Banana Museum.

And of course, the island gastronomy should not be forgotten. You can start with an entrée of pork scratchings, fresh or roast cheese, followed by kid in sauce or a grilled fillet of 'patudo' – red tuna fish, accompanied by the island's famous wrinkled potatoes with 'mojo verde'. Another real delight that the island offers due to its incredible climate are its fruit: bananas, oranges, avocados or mangos, all of them are manna of the gods on this island. ■

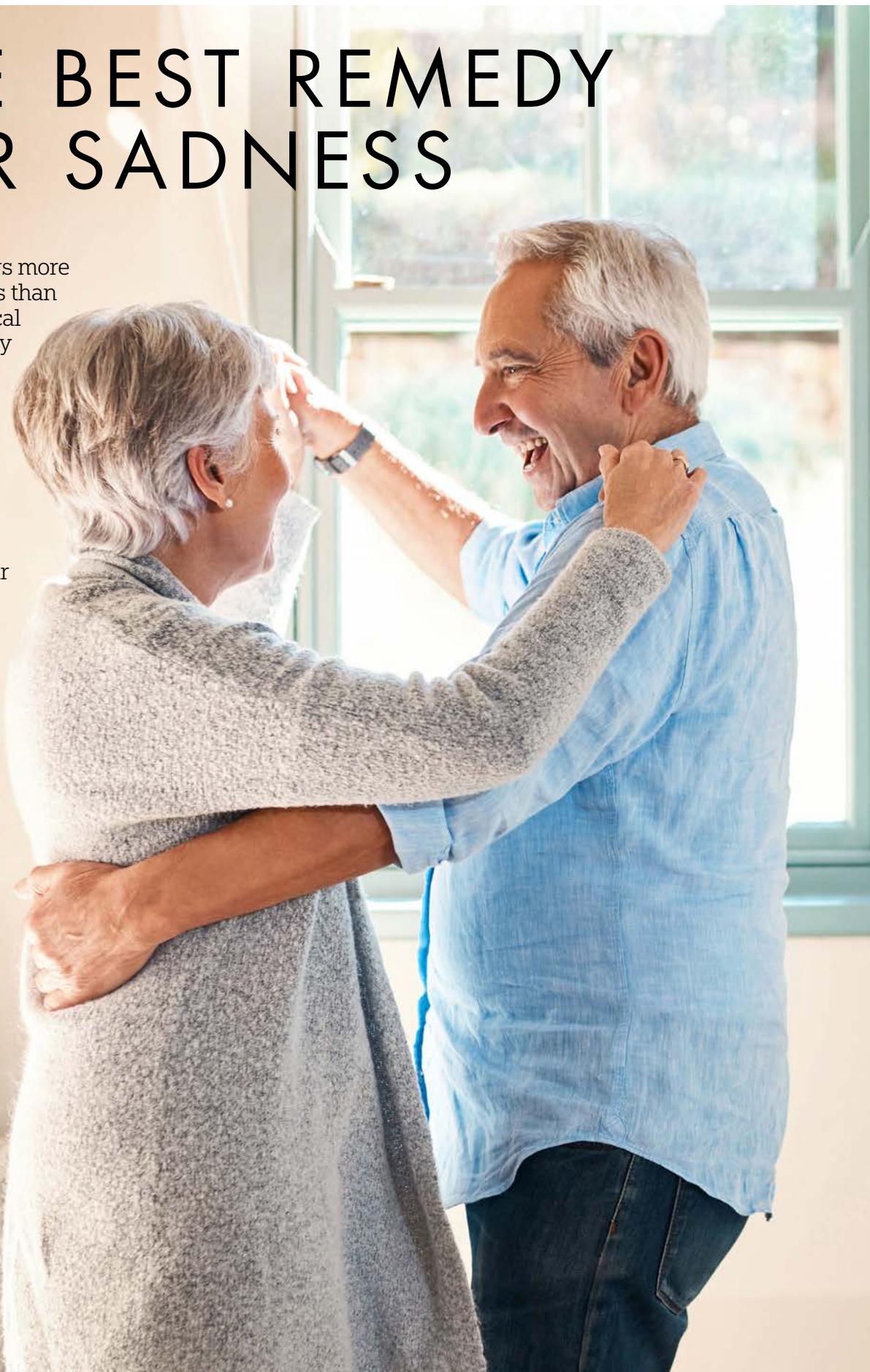




THE BEST REMEDY FOR SADNESS

by **Ona Falcó**

Dancing brings more health benefits than just the physical ones caused by movement. It is an activity that improves your mood and dancing, alone or accompanied, contributes to activating your happiness hormones.



There are many factors that can cause mood imbalances and cause discouragement and apathy, such as the appearance of an illness, work stress, economic problems... but luckily, there are also many activities and exercises that can help to overcome the ups and downs along the way and cause a positive influence on our levels of happiness and enthusiasm. Amongst these, dancing stands out, an activity which in addition to burning up calories due to the actual aerobic exercise it involves, also contributes to reducing stress, anxiety and chronic pain, as well as allowing the brain to disconnect.

You don't have to be an expert dancer, you just have to let yourself go, forget what others might think and move to the rhythm of the music. Dancing activates the production of endorphins, better known as the "happiness hormones", and it contributes to the regulation of dopamine and serotonin levels, which are neurotransmitters that are closely linked to pleasure and to the controlling of emotions, respectively.

Although intrusive thoughts might appear when dancing, such as shame, sadness, concern, the most important

point is to enjoy the moment, either alone or accompanied, at a party or in the middle of the dining room or the kitchen. There is no perfect place or time for letting our hair down. In fact, it has been shown that as a song continues and we start to move, we become more confident, our self-esteem increases and our energy levels rise, in turn, improving performance, mood and physical and mental health.

It is also worth mentioning that this discipline has no age limit. In spite of not being able to carry out such fast, sudden movements, older people should continue to dance, as it helps to prevent heart disease and it strengthens the muscles and joints. Likewise, remembering steps, improvising or constantly keeping up with the rhythm, forces the memory to work, improving concentration capacity, developing mental sharpness and reducing the risk of suffering from illnesses such as Alzheimer and slowing down its evolution. A study carried out by the Albert Einstein School of Medicine in New York endorses this benefit, which showed that dancing assiduously reduces the possibilities of developing senile dementia by up to 76%.

Zumba: training, fun and balance

The dance universe is extremely diverse and not everyone has the same taste or skills. One of the dances that has become popular in recent times is the Zumba, an activity that merges entertainment and sport. It was created at the beginning of the 1990s in Colombia, when a fitness instructor, Alberto "Beto" Pérez, forgot to bring his normal music to the gym and decided to replace it with some CDs that he kept in his car. The combination of aerobic exercises and Latin rhythms made a deep impression on everyone. From the 2000s onwards, Zumba has become viral in other places around the world, until the present day.

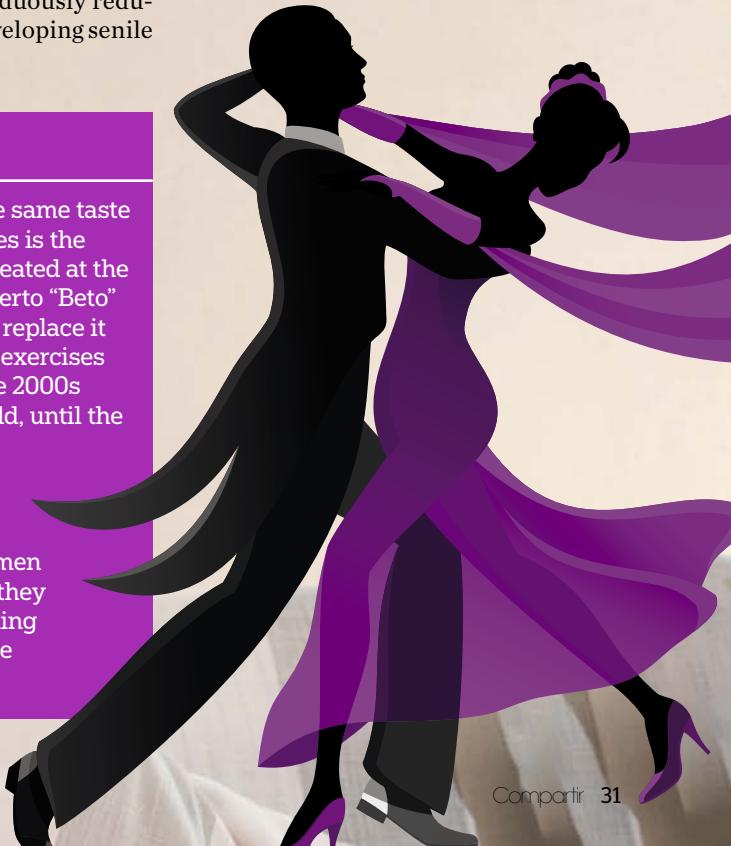
Many studies have shown its great benefits on a physical level, but scientists from the Institute of Exercise and Health Science from the University of Basle, Switzerland, revealed that after eight weeks practicing Zumba, the quality of life of a group of women increased by 9% and their self-esteem by 16%. On the other hand, they also showed that the characteristic hip-swinging and tummy-turning movements help to become stronger in the trunk area and improve balance in older, overweight women.

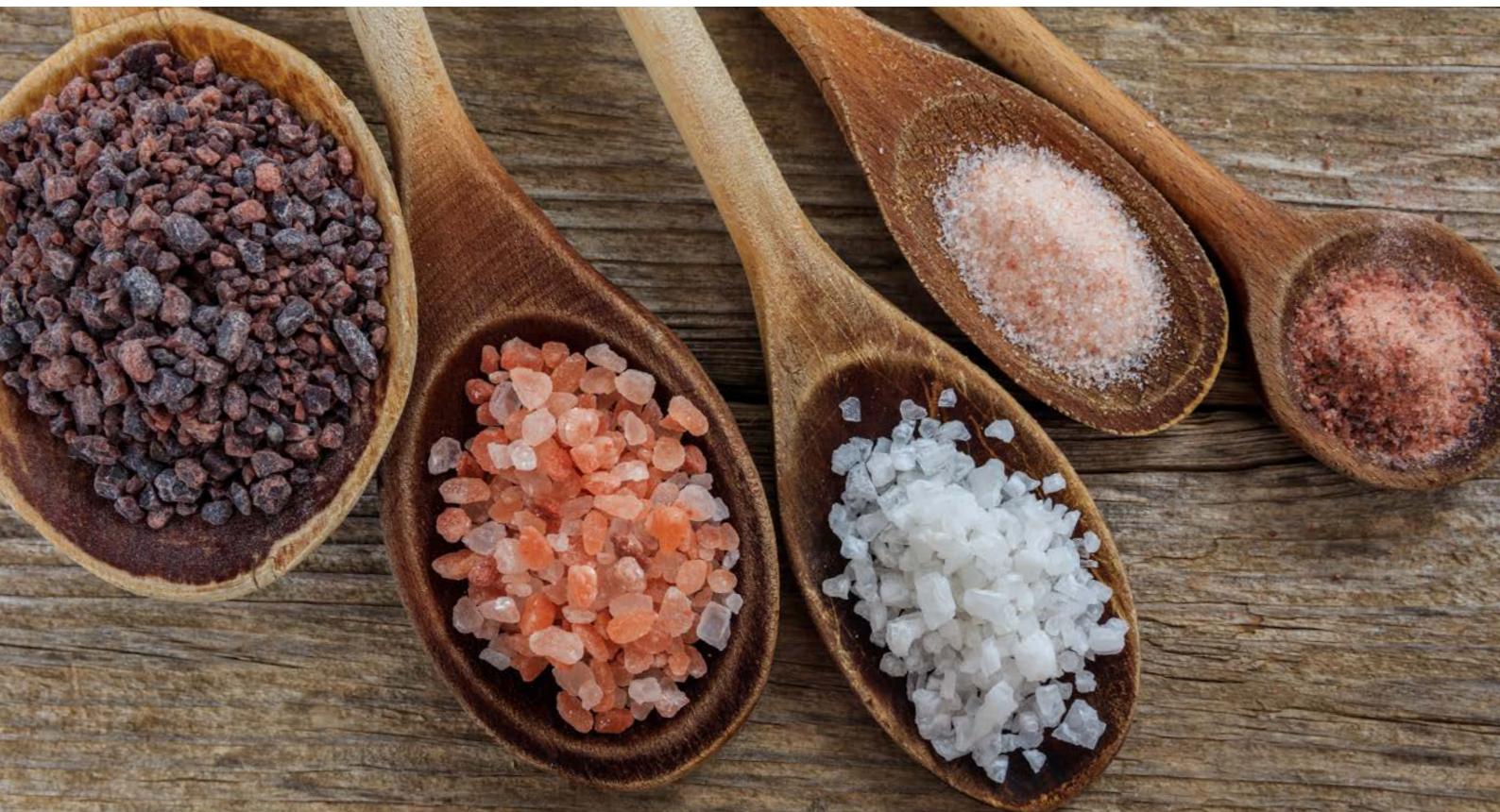
DANCE THERAPY

In the case of suffering from a more serious problem, dance therapy or movement therapy can be used, that is to say, "the psychotherapeutic use of movement to promote an individual's emotional, social, cognitive and physical integration," as described by the American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA).

According to a recent study carried out by the team from the Creative Arts Therapy Department at the University of Drexel (Philadelphia), people suffering from schizophrenia who use this type of dance therapies experienced a decrease in symptoms such as aural hallucinations, paranoia and delirious thoughts, in addition to increasing their emotional expression and alleviating feelings of anguish.

Dance is one of the many routes we use to express ourselves and get to know ourselves, as well as for communicating and relating with the outside world. In this way it is much easier to reflect and express our feelings and concerns in a non-verbal way. ■





DO WE EAT TOO MUCH SALT?

Sodium is an essential element for body function, but eating too much of it causes many health problems.

by **Sergio Escartín**

"We need the food and drink industry to reduce the sodium levels in processed foods."

This declaration by the Director General of the WHO, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, is an advance for one of the next great debates related to food and health. And the fact is that every year there are an estimated 11 million deaths around the world are linked to a deficient diet, of which 3 million are attributed to a high sodium intake, according to the WHO.

So are we eating too much salt?

The WHO recommends adults to eat less than 5 grams of salt a day, but this amount is exceeded. It is estimated that around 70% of sodium intake in the western world comes from processed, ready-to-eat food, with just 8-20% derived from salt added at the table. Therefore, the answer to the question is affirmative and it is highly concerning.

"We have some high salt intake figures that we really should try to reduce. A large part of the population exceeds the recommended salt intake by 50%.

We need 1.25 g of salt a day and we must try to keep our intake below this," states Sònia Vallès, a dietitian-nutritionist at the Nutrition Unit of SCIAS Hospital de Barcelona.

Sugar, calories or cholesterol are components that are well-known by the population and elements that they look at very carefully, but this is not the case when we talk about salt. "The population is not as aware of the problems that it could cause and there is not as much legislation when labelling products that could be harmful due to an excess of sodium. The food industry is not interested in reducing salt levels more, as sodium is a great preservative which has always been used. Another reason is that sodium is a flavour-enhancer and if legislation reduces salt levels a great deal, the flavour of the products could change completely and be rejected by the population," Vallès explains.

Responsible consumption

Against this backdrop, the solution lies in education and responsible consumption. "Reducing the consump-

tion of salt added to meals is a good idea. However, if used in moderation, salt makes all kinds of healthy foods tastier, such as soups, legumes and vegetables. Within certain limits, it can be included in our meals without too much worry,” the nutritionist adds. What is clear is that it is neither possible nor recommendable to eliminate salt from our diet, as “sodium is essential for maintaining several of the organism’s physiological processes and functions. Therefore, a deficiency of this mineral entails some risks, but eating too much of it in our diets is dangerous for our health,” the dietitian-nutritionist from the Hospital de Barcelona indicates.

Diseases such as kidney failure, high blood pressure, obesity or cardiovascular problems require salt to be reduced in the daily diet. “According to the WHO, high blood pressure is a determining factor in the appearance of diseases

■ If used in moderation, salt makes all kinds of healthy foods tastier, such as soups, legumes and vegetables

and the consumption of sodium is one of the main factors involved in arterial hypertension (AHT). A high salt intake has also been linked to an increase in the risk of suffering from stomach cancer and osteoporosis. Therefore, reducing the amount of salt is beneficial regarding these and other diseases, but always following the indications of a healthcare professional,” Vallès explains.

The process is not simple. If we get used to eating with added salt from when we are very young, readapting our taste buds to ‘bland’ foods will be more complicated, but not impossible. “Each person needs a different amount of time to adapt, but we are talking about a few months. It could be conditioned by many factors and diseases,” Vallès indicates before stating that the prize for abandoning salt is, at times, surprising. “When you get used to eating less salt, you are likely to appreciate your food more, recognising a wider range of flavours,” Sònia Vallès concludes. ■

Other flavours

Less salt (put the saltcellar to one side)

Sònia Vallès indicates four actions that could help to reduce the daily salt intake:

- Give priority to eating fresh food. There is very little sodium in raw fruit and vegetables.
- Reduce the intake of foods with high added sodium content: processed or ultra-processed foods, cured meats and sausages, prepared, marinated and smoked meat products, industrial cakes and pastries, commercial sauces...
- If you eat snacks, opt for those without added salt, such as raw or just roasted dried fruit and nuts.
- Add spices or condiments that give flavour (garlic, pepper, basil, parsley, thyme...) instead of salt.

Healthy alternatives

Although the normal recommendation is always to get used to reducing the amount of salt, there are alternatives that help to enhance flavours without having to add extra salt. “There are some condiments, spices and aromatic herbs that bring flavour to dishes, with less or no sodium, such as pepper, oregano, thyme, parsley, garlic, powdered onion or lemon juice amongst others,” Vallès advises.



Foods to avoid

The dietitian-nutritionist from the Hospital de Barcelona recommends eliminating some foods from your diet for people who wish to reduce the salt level in their meals.

“The key lies in eliminating products such as the so-called packaged snacks that contain large amounts of salt. Amongst these are crisps, industrial cakes and pastries, salted dried fruit and nuts, commercial sauces, instant broth cubes... It is also a good idea to reduce the proportion of other processed and ultra-processed food categories, as well as marinated products, cured meats and sausages and tinned goods.”



FROM TEXT TO PICTURES

Illustrated notes are best for remembering things

It is a universal gesture. When we have to remember something, the first thing we do is write it down. Whether it is on one of the famous, original post-it notes, on a paper napkin or on a mobile phone app. The wish to remember something is associated with writing it down, but a study by the magazine 'Experimental Aging Research' indicates that there could be a better way of keeping things fresh in our memories: drawing a picture.

And the fact is that unlike a plain text, drawing makes the brain work in a different way to writing, forcing it to process visual information, translating the meaning of a word into an image, while carrying out a physical action, all at the same time. For this reason, the study indicates that the multifaceted approach of using the technique of drawing benefits memory as it lines up many different regions of the brain. To



demonstrate this, 48 adults aged between 20 and over 80 were worked with. All of them were asked to write down 15 words and draw another 15 words, using a simple drawing or doodle. After a period of time devoted to another, very different activity, they were asked to remember as many of the previous words and drawings. For all



the age groups, the memory exercise resulted in them remembering more of the words that they had drawn than the ones they had written down. They repeated the experiment months later and the result was the same: the researchers found that drawing was a better tool for memorising, regardless of the quality of the images or the time taken in completing them. And the benefit is even greater in people who are starting to suffer from some type of memory loss and dementia. Their recall is better if they are remembered due to a drawing. ■

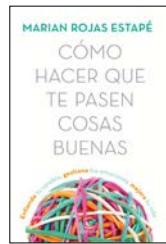
..... DISCONNECTION

Book

Cómo hacer que te pasen cosas buenas (How to make good things happen to you)

Espasa

Bringing together scientific, psychological and human points of view, Marian Rojas Estapé offers us a deep reflection, scattered with useful advice and with an eminently educational vocation, regarding the application of our own skills to find a full, happy existence, vindicating the role of optimism.



Series

Santa Evita

Disney+

How did the legend of Eva Perón arise? Santa Evita is a series based on the best-seller of the same name by Tomás Eloy Martínez, which narrates how the First Lady of Argentina became a legend after her death. Seven episodes to discover the reason why her body was embalmed for three years while waiting for a monument that was never built.



App

Fabulous

iOS and Android

This well-known, award-winning app helps to motivate you by providing you with healthy actions every day. It helps you with advice ranging from what to have for breakfast to the importance of drinking enough, from going out for a walk or meditating for a few minutes... Healthy habits and routines that are easy to complete to give priority to your mental health and to help you feel better every day.





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