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Editorial

Pharmaceutical activity and medicines structure and normalize on different levels of contemporary society. Medicines are the output of scientific and technological innovation and are produced by pharmaceutical industries, which are multinational companies overall. Retail community pharmacies and hospital pharmacy services produce a small number of medicines, in minute scale, albeit fulfilling quality, efficacy and safety criteria.

In addition to global drug trends, the European Union has specific requirements. Medicines are subject to scientific, medical, legal, ethical standards, among others. Health policies strive to correlate with research and marketing policies. The pharmaceutical professions have a deep sense of professional responsibility. Besides their scientific and clinical aspects, medicines have a strong social component. One must consider the new areas related to medicines in modern times, like genetics, biotechnology and others. These innovative paths bring important scientific, technological, legal, economic challenges and, particularly, challenges in private, public and social health.

This issue of *Debater a Europa* focuses on “Europe, pharmacy, medicines” and it includes a number of high-level studies, resulting from research conducted by several experts. You will find that the articles discuss major issues. The history of scientific discoveries and of the pharmaceutical industry; doctor-pharmacist-herbalist social relations; the importance and impacts of some therapeutic hazards, e.g. thalidomide; the history of pharmaceutical legislation in some European countries, including Portugal and Poland; orphan drugs and counterfeiting of medicines. The issue of doping and its ties with the food and medicine world; legal studies on clinical trials are also analysed. These studies help us to ponder on the topic of the medicinal product in the European context.

The authors' recognised scientific profile and different scientific backgrounds, in addition to their diverse origins (four from Spain, three from France, two from Portugal, one from Great Britain and one from Poland) lend the journal *Debater a Europa* a standard guarantee of quality.

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