



From the desk of the CEO
Mario J. Paredes

HEALTH Care inspired by LOVE

SOMOS Community Care: The 2019 SYMPOSIUM and Meeting with the POPE

SOMOS Community Care: the non-profit, physician-led organization with a network of more than 2,500 health care providers who offer culturally competent health care to patients coming from the most vulnerable communities in New York City—especially Latinos, Asians, African Americans and immigrants of other origins who live in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens—held from September 19 to 21 an Annual Symposium entitled: "Transformative Primary Care: Promoting Health and Well-Being for Displaced, Immigrant and Vulnerable Patients".

The Symposium centered its main theme on the need to provide health care to immigrant families and all those who have been marginalized by society and the need to serve patients who have fewer resources, especially in the immigrant communities around the world. This Symposium was made possible thanks to the sponsorship of Corinthian IPA, SOMOS Community Care, Health First, MediSys, ECAP, Wyckoff, Montefiore, Dental medical Dominican Society, Emblem Health, NRS y ECL.

The purpose of these Symposiums, which are held annually by our health organization, SOMOS, is to offer academic credits to medical staff—this time in an academic-scientific agreement with Einstein Campus Montefiore Medical Center — to sponsor the continuing advancement in the medical sciences of our professionals and to maintain the validity of their medical licenses, as required by the government.

In the context of this annual Symposium of Medicine for the physicians of SOMOS—which evolved into a summit on health care in the city of Rome—and under the guidance and leadership of Doctor Ramón Tallaj, Pope Francis granted us a private audience in the Paul VI Audience Hall. Although the Pope usually conducts public hearings in this Audience Hall every Wednesday, we were received in this auditorium, with its large



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capacity, due to the large number of doctors—675 doctors—attending this Symposium.

As in previous Symposiums, the doctors attending were each responsible for their own travel, participation and accreditation expenses for the academic event.

At the opening of the papal audience, as the Chief Executive Officer of SOMOS, I presented the Founder and Chairman of SOMOS, who is also the president of the Independent Physicians Association, Dr. Ramon Tallaj to Pope Francis.

Dr. Ramon Tallaj greeted Pope Francis and informed him of the efforts that we are making in New York City: in rediscovering the value of the community doctor as a primary care physician, or family doctor, caring for the health issues of immigrants in New York City who have come from all corners of the Earth.

It was a unique honor to be received by Pope Francis. *"This occasion allows us to reflect on our mission to increase access to health care for immigrant families. We are working to fulfill the mission of Christ, which is healing the sick,"* said Dr. R. Tallaj to Pope Francis. *"Thanks to this Symposium, we have harnessed revitalized energy to intensify our efforts to bring down barriers to access to health care and provide better results in the health care of the most vulnerable families in the city of New York."*

Dr. Tallaj then communicated to the Pope the mandate that our health organization SOMOS received from the government of New York State, a mandate that has since become our organizational conviction: that the preventive function of the primary care physician is essential and allows for cost reductions in health care by avoiding hospitalizations or unnecessary visits to the emergency room by focusing on the personal attention and close relationship the doctors have with patients in their own language and culture, as well as an electronic record of the history of each patient that allows for the monitoring of progress and/or setbacks in the patients' health.



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Our doctors do not receive their salaries based on patient visits; rather, they are compensated for health improvements—through patient follow-up, treatment, and medical regimen—which are reported and verified for each of the patients, who receive in-person treatment.

Thus, and innovatively, SOMOS medical professionals are amply rewarded and motivated by the improvement, recovery, and progress of the health of each patient treated: the ultimate goal of health care. The 2,500 network primary care physicians who make up SOMOS have accepted this new payment method dependent on, as I said, improvements in patient health and welfare, which, for every patient, is seen, achieved, and demonstrated.

In his address to the SOMOS medical community, the Pope drew from a humanistic, Christian, and integral vision brought forth from the gospel of Jesus Christ. Supporting our vision and health-focused mission while encouraging and urging us to continue our efforts and work in contributing to health being protected and recognized as a fundamental right of every human being, especially for those who are the neediest, the dispossessed, the excluded, the disadvantaged, and the “discarded” on our planet.

Thus, the Pope told us:

“For several years now, in New York City, you have dedicated yourselves to the assistance and healthcare of those who live on the margins of society, in situations of poverty and hunger.

In this way, you spread the culture of encounter, ‘where no one is discarded or pigeonholed, but all are sought out because all are needed to reveal the Lord’s face.’ Your daily commitment is aimed at contrasting that throwaway culture that dominates many social settings.

In doing so, you are the protagonists of an overall care of the person, making available with generosity and altruism a holistic service of doctors and social-sanitary agents, who offer the benefits of preventive medicine, therapies, and rehabilitation. This solidarity with the sick is a real treasure



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and is a distinctive sign of a care and authentic health assistance that place the person and their needs at the center.

Your organization is distinguished by the relationship of empathy and trust that it succeeds in establishing with the sick and their families, sharing their lives and becoming closer to their culture and language, in order to foster human relations. ... The commitment of every healthcare worker to the sick finds its fullest expression, and is also most effective, when it is animated by love. And, through daily gestures, this style makes the culture of care flourish as an essential element of the common good.”

This Symposium and the meeting with the Pope—a warm meeting that broke protocol with the Pope personally and affectionately greeting those present – constitutes, without a doubt, a historic milestone for each attendee and for our health organization SOMOS, because we feel confirmed, encouraged, and energized in our work of HEALING—which is also SAVING—human lives.