FUNSALUD (Mexican Health Foundation), José Ignacio Campillo García, Executive President



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Recognized by the University of Pennsylvania as one of the top 30 think tanks in the world for health policy, FUNSALUD is committed to propose solutions to Mexico's most important challenges with regard to healthcare. The recently appointed executive president discusses the current challenges of the sector and how the foundation supports an increasing collaboration with the private sector.

What are the main challenges faced by the healthcare sector today?

Despite improvement, Mexico still invests very little in public health. Today the country spends only 6.2 percent of GDP in the healthcare sector, well below the average of 9.3 percent of OECD countries, and nearly 50 percent of healthcare-related costs are out-of-pocket, against an average of 20 percent in other OECD countries.

The national health insurance program Seguro Popular, implemented in 2004 and intended to increase healthcare coverage for the population, today covers nearly 57 million Mexicans. As penetration is almost complete, currently our main challenge is to augment the number of diseases covered by the program and the quality of first-contact healthcare service. Today 13 percent of all prescriptions are made by physicians at 13,000 pharmacies with adjoining medical office across Mexico. This trend tells us that the Mexican healthcare sector is not meeting the demand of the

population. If the government does not fill the gap, someone else will do. So, we must work along with government, industry and healthcare providers (private and public) to improve this situation.

Also, the current scheme of financing the sector is not economically viable in the long term. At FUNSALUD we support an increased participation of the private sector in the health sector through outsourcing of services and public-private partnerships (PPPs). But there are still many questions about how this should happen: are private players well prepared to provide such services? What portion of the market should they take? How would the political forces react to a stronger participation of the private sector? The healthcare sector somehow reminds me of what happened to Mexico's telecommunication and energy sectors: we have the correct regulatory framework but need better ways to implement it.

This is why it is particularly important for FUNSALUD to be a dialogue platform among actors of the healthcare sector, especially with the. Communication among industry, academy and sanitary authorities is crucial to create constructive contributions and mutual advantage. Collaboration is the key word. And taking in consideration Dr Mercedes Juan is former President of FUNSALUD, the dialogue with the Ministry of Health is today in it's best moment.

To reduce the future impact of Mexico's current epidemiological trend, the Ministry of Health is implementing prevention programs. What is left to do?

We need to be aware of the metabolic disorders that are afflicting our population and attack them from every angle and perspective. The reasons behind this trend are multifactorial. First, it originated in the bad eating habits of the Mexican population. Then, our country switched from being a rural society to a completely urbanized population, which has modified our lifestyle. Last but not least, genetics: a research project currently developed in collaboration with the Texas Biomedical Research Institute provided some preliminary results that confirm the Mexican population is particularly susceptible to metabolic diseases. This is one example about how important the study of nutrition, obesity and metabolic diseases is for FUNSALUD, subjects of two of our most important projects: the Nestlé Fund for Nutrition and the Healthy & Active Child Project.

Those disorders are an absolute priority for us because they do not only represent a huge human drama, but also insurmountable costs. To change the mentality of our population we have to switch our focus from diseases to health. We need to prevent diseases before they manifest. We must completely change the way we approach health, as it is the most important part of human life.

Mexico is a country full of opportunities, but we need technological aid and investments to reach our full potential. There is a huge area of opportunity in the fields of information and

communication technology. Mexico is home to nearly 118 million people and to achieve a real universal healthcare system, we would definitely take advantage of technologies such as the electronic medical record.

In addition to government and academia, FUNSALUD also works with companies from the private sector, such as Nestlé, NADRO, GSK, Carso, Coca Cola, Médica Sur, among others. What is the vision behind this collaboration?

FUNSALUD is comprised of Mexican businessmen with a great sense of social responsibility and worried about the health of millions of Mexicans. This has allowed us to involve further the food and beverage industry in the activities of the foundation. To our surprise, companies are in an excellent position to help us research how their products affect the epidemiological profile of the population, including the psychological aspects behind pathologies such as obesity and diabetes, without compromising our point of view in particular agendas. Today, we are trying to revitalize the bonds between the most influential brands in the market and the Mexican government. This dialogue will help us understand the status quo of the current situation under an atmosphere of transparency, openness and neutrality.

You took over the position of executive president at FUNSALUD in June this year. What does this appointment mean to you?

To me the appointment at FUNSALUD represents a comeback to the health sector. In the past, I had the opportunity to be vice-minister for regulation and health promotion, but it was a turbulent time where issues like birth control methods, campaigns and the launching of generics did not help much. Now, I am back in the health sector and, to my surprise, I see a more consolidated community, a stronger industry, a greater concern for health-related issues and an increased interest in sharing research results from different fields, in the public as well as private sectors – that’s impressive. Now I see myself in an institution that embraces a sincere effort to bridge the gaps between public and private financing in an open collaboration with the public sector.

For more than 30 years FUNSALUD has been a promoter of initiatives and policies for the health sector. Perhaps that is why it has been a generator of top-level civil servants – as evidenced by the recent appointment of Mercedes Juan Lopez as minister of health and Eduardo Gonzalez Pier as vice-minister for integration and development. A very good example is the current objective of creating a universal healthcare system, a proposal FUNSALUD has been driving for a long time and that today is one of the most important issues on the government agenda. The foundation has been categorized as one of the top 30 think tanks in the world by the University of Pennsylvania

within the framework of the “Think Tanks and Civil Societies” program (TTCSP) it conducts every year for emerging governments and civil societies. We are currently ranked as the 13th best think tank and we are the only Latin American institution on the list. So, being appointed as executive president of the foundation is an honor for me!

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