

## ***“Ethics in health institutions: the logic of care and the logic of management”***

On 10 November the Víctor Grífols i Lucas Foundation organized a seminar with the title, “Ethics in health institutions: the logic of care and the logic of management.” The aim of the seminar was to create a space for dialogue and reflection on these modes of thinking, to help identify how they interact with each other and what the principal obstacles they face are. Victoria Camps, President of the Víctor Grífols i Lucas Foundation, and Josep Maria Lozano, course coordinator and lecturer at the Department of Social Sciences at ESADE, opened the seminar.

The discussion day was organized around two papers, followed by a discussion session in which participants shared their opinions and experiences. The first paper was given by Diego Gracia, Professor of the History of Medicine at the Medical School of the Complutense University in Madrid. Gracia gave an overview of the historical development of health institutions. He recalled how hospitals arose as charity institutions, operated by the church, and it was not until the 18th century that they became civic health institutions run by doctors. In the second half of the 20th century, doctors were replaced in this role by health managers.

According to Diego Gracia, the oil crisis of 1973 placed a question mark over the welfare state. The demand for health services and levels of expenditure had both risen. In this context, health management was born, with the aim of ensuring the economic viability of health services. During the 1980s everything began to be measured in financial units. Things cost what somebody is prepared to pay for them, and in the health sphere this gives rise to conflicts. Diego Gracia introduced the issue of values, drawing a distinction between instrumental values (exchange values, which have a price) and intrinsic values (which cannot be measured in monetary units).

He argued that the health professions deal with intrinsic values, which include life, health, pleasure and well-being. But the technology they use for this purpose is increasingly expensive, and this has an effect on the cost of health care. In this domain, dominated by instrumental values, ethics has to be ruled by the principle of

efficiency. And this produces a potential conflict between the value of efficiency and that of justice, more intimately associated with health.

Justice or efficiency? We find ourselves dealing with a conflict of values: two values, and a single logic. In Diego Gracia's opinion, health professionals and managers share the same logic but their roles oblige them to promote two sets of values, in one case the values of life and health, and in the other case the values of efficacy, efficiency and effectiveness. It is not a question of choosing between these two sets of values but rather of choosing the best means of protecting both or of infringing upon them as little as possible.

### **The logic of management**

Following Diego Gracia's presentation, Manel Peiró, director of the Integrated Health Services Management Programme at ESADE, gave a talk on the logic of management. Peiró argued that the principles and values of a bureaucratic organization are not the same as those of professionals, and indeed that they often clash. There is a conflict due to the difficulty of combining the standards and values of professionals with organizational requirements and demands.

There is a conflict between managers and health professionals due to the confusion about their respective responsibilities and the different perspective from which they approach problems. Despite this, the relationship is not to be understood purely in terms of conflict. Some authors have argued that bureaucratic structures create possibilities for career development, and this explains why some professionals have been prepared to give up part of their autonomy in exchange for prestige, security, and the advantages of belonging to organizations.

Peiró presented an analysis of the different types of organization and health professional, and offered a typology of varying forms of job commitment. Finally, he argued that the efforts of managers of health organizations should be aimed at managing potential conflict, preserving the autonomy of health professionals so that they can concentrate on exercising their profession and, in general, creating the conditions which allow them to reconcile their commitment to their profession with the organization in which they work, so that the two sets of loyalties are aligned.

Manel Peiró's presentation was followed by a discussion session. The participants included health managers, doctors, nurses, psychologists, philosophers and health professionals. Both the discussion session and the presentations will be published shortly as a monograph.