
SPAS THERMAL TREATMENTS IN ITALY

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Thermal treatments, in Italy, have very ancient traditions ; they represent consolidated therapeutic aid in the cure of certain ailments besides being one of the historic pillars on which modern western medicine was founded.

For centuries, now it has been recognised that thermal waters help in maintaining good health through the use of their natural resources.

The ancient Romans recognised the properties of hot spring therapy and the remains of splendid thermal buildings (Caracalla Therme in Rome, Baia Therme in Naples, ecc) confirm the importance, in terms of treatments and well being, which was attributed to these resorts, which were at the same time places for meeting friends and for cultural exchange.

For centuries the use of hot spring waters has been reiterated in an empirical manner, even up to most recent times, when the creation of an autonomous medical branch, Thermal Medicine, finally gave scientific status to the practice.

Actually, we can define thermal medicine as the branch of the medical sciences, that treats lots of pathologies using natural treatments and WHO considers it among the traditional medicines.

In Italy, such as in many European countries, thermal treatments are an accepted and integral part of the medical and national health service, and this underlines the important role it holds in maintaining good health, in the prevention of certain complaints and/or of their development.

The role given to thermal treatment for the cure and rehabilitation of numerous pathologies has been recognised by the Italian Ministry of Health, which is the highest order in our country regarding health assistance and cure.

The growing interest for hot spring therapy has convinced the Ministry of Health to produce a decree and, through a specially formed commission within the Superior Health Department, a detailed list of groups of ailments which gain real benefit from the use of different types of thermal resources and the article n. 2 of this decree establishes that the Spas which give treatments for the mentioned pathologies, are obliged to carry out studies to evaluate the effectiveness of the thermal treatment, according to guide lines laid down by the Superior Health Department, which is governed by the most qualified experts in the various fields of medicine in Italy.

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However, the cultural relationship between man and water remains, since health and wellbeing have always been researched through this element.

Thermal medicine, even with its more rigorous, medical and scientific definition, is loyal to a global approach to men's health where external stimulations and therapeutic effects induced by thermal treatments are analyzed and combined together.

Nowadays, thermal medicine has become a science that utilizes, similarly to all other medical disciplines, diagnostic and therapeutic aids that are now available, thanks to technological progress and scientific knowledge. This rigorous approach is defined by the will and the need to take complete advantage of the therapeutic properties of thermal resources and make them more rational through the scientific research promoted and led by Universities that are also responsible for the development and completion of the doctor's formation in the hydrological sector.

Spa towns and Universities collaborate closely together in order to deepen the knowledge of the action mechanisms of the thermal therapy and its possibilities of use in a constantly renewed and updated way that is also coherent with the practice and common language of science.

The modernity of the infrastructures, advanced technological solutions, and verifiability of the scientific results make the modern spa a real medical aid whose effectiveness is mainly addressed to restore the patient's physical and psychic homeostasis.

The satisfying results and continuous scientific curiosity, have animated, reinforced and nourished the desire to make Thermal Medicine emerge from what has been often an more modern guide lines regarding the rigorous methods of scientific research, in the constant aim of finding new rational and therapeutic evidences.