
PANORAMA PEOPLE

Interview with Julian Vadell Martinez



By Chelsea Hedquist

Julian Vadell Martinez is a registered nurse and is currently pursuing a master's degree in public health in France. He is president of the European Nursing Student Association (ENSA).

How do you envisage the health workforce in 2030?

I am optimistic and like to imagine that we will have a larger number of dedicated health professionals, to address the shortage of nurses, for example, that we see in many European countries. The way to address such shortages is by making nursing and other medical professions more attractive. This requires adequate resources, of course, but I think it goes beyond that. We need to change the perspective of nurses and medical professionals from the start, from the point of their education. We need professors who will sit down with students and say, "You are the future. Now let's discuss and share ideas about that future." We need to be allowed to think critically about why we do things and why certain processes do or don't work. If they don't work, we need to have the freedom to ask what we can do to change them. Without critical thinking, the profession will not grow and progress.

What needs to be addressed urgently to meet Europe's health needs in 2030 and beyond?

I see two key priority areas: the first is the ageing population and how we will care for the elderly; the second is health inequalities. We don't need to go outside Europe to see dramatic health inequalities. We have people here who don't have the right to health, who don't have the means to pay for the medical treatment or care they need, and health systems that do not offer them other options. We need to think about what will happen in 10 or 15 years when these people, who have not been receiving the care they need for so many years, are confronted with major medical issues. This will affect budgets and it will affect society. We will suffer the consequences later for not acting today, and the cost may be more than we can handle.

How must the health workforce change if it is to achieve the goals set for 2030?

We need to stop overemphasizing the clinical and hospital view, and we need to work harder on health prevention and promotion. The evidence tells us that these areas are vital, especially when it comes to caring for an ageing

population. We also need to look beyond specialization. Being an expert can be very useful, but we also need to be prepared to manage all kinds of health situations. We need to give nurses and other health professionals tools to approach many different health problems in many different ways.

We also need to make interprofessional collaboration a reality. We talk about it, study it, take exams on the subject. But do we really put it into practice? We cannot understand health without collaborating with other professions. It's crazy even to try and it's harmful for patients.

We need to take the initiative to collaborate ourselves – it can't be imposed from above. This means meeting together as doctors, nurses, nursing assistants, physiotherapists, psychologists and more, respecting each other as peers and recognizing that we are all here for the patients. If we all love what we do and all share the same objective, then there shouldn't be a problem collaborating.

It takes time to change a profession, but 2030 is not far away. So we have to start making these changes now and we, as health professionals, have to be leaders in making change happen.

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