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Editorial

The world has become so specialized and siloed that we often forget the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to make change. And yet, since few decades already, researchers with different backgrounds more and more rise awareness about the necessity of interdisciplinary collaboration. Indeed, sometimes the insight of who belongs to another discipline or even to another “horizon of sensitivity”, pushes others to think outside the box, breaking with stereotypes and schemas that often lock the doors and prevent the true progress.

At the Fourth International Vatican Conference, hosted by the Pontifical Council for Culture and Cura Foundation in collaboration with the Secretariat of State, Science and Faith – STOQ Foundation, the Pontifical Academy for Life, and the Vatican’s Secretariat for Communication, we touched on many topics from different angles. We gathered physicians, patients and their families, visionary scientists and philanthropists investing in health and prevention together with regulatory officials and companies paving the way toward more rapid delivery and commercialization of cutting-edge innovation. We explored how new treatments could change the lives of millions. We have learned about the way gene therapies are treating rare diseases and stem cells therapies are restoring damaged tissues in intractable diseases like multiple sclerosis and cerebral palsy. We have had a glimpse into the ways virtual reality technologies have given sight to those who have lost it and decreased chronic pain to reduce opioid addiction. We have heard from patients who have taken control of their own treatment and influenced the marketplace to design better solutions to manage disease. We have discussed ways to extend health and prevent disease from ravaging our bodies. We have learned how to leverage philanthropy and create partnerships to accelerate the development of technologies, and we have heard inspiring stories of healing and hope, from patients, families and their doctors. We explored also how faith and religious “codes of conduct” can impact our health.

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We came together and shared our perspectives respectfully, regardless of how different they may seem, and built bridges to create a shared sensitivity towards needs and challenges that intersect science, culture and religion in regard to health care for a healthier global society and more importantly for the society with deeper solidarity.

Ultimately, disease does not discriminate between class, race or gender. It makes no exceptions and impacts all of our lives. Fighting for a healthier future is a cause everyone can get behind because each one of us has battled illness or knows someone very close to them who is fighting disease. Unite To Cure asks all people to raise their voices towards a common goal: advancing cures and making the world a healthier place.

That's why it is important to build bridges between the natural sciences and emerging technologies, society, culture and religion. We believe in order to improve human health globally, there is an imperative to create an open dialogue and share pivotal knowledge on illness prevention, breakthrough technologies that hold the promise to repair and cure disease and how to prepare for the future. We need to look at the potential for good and the impact technology may have to change humanity forever. At the same time we all need to understand that in many ways today's issues related to human health and consequently to the health care systems are in-rooted in our lifestyles, having strictly a cultural and anthropological dimension. Its enough to think that today's paradox consists in fact that we have reached the point where more people are dying because of the abundance of food instead of its scarcity. The difference between benefit and harm will depend on the choices we make and the actions we take.

The papers that follow offer some insights on a complexity of topics in contemporary society, through its various institutions and committed members it is addressing. Each of us can make a difference and is invited to do so. It is impossible to accurately predict what the world will look like 50 years from now, but it is clear that its future will depend on choices we make now.

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