Healthy Aging and Balneology

M. Zeki KARAGULLE
President, International Society of Medical Hydrology and Climatology

Emerging population with advanced age is a phenomenon in developed countries, and is also going to be on the agenda of the developing countries in the years of 2000. Increasing ratio of elderly population calls not only attention to the common health problems related to ageing and but the necessity to fight against these problems more effectively and protect the health and wellbeing of elderly population and keep them as “healthy” as possible as the aging process is progressing. The concept of “healthy aging” has emerged recently which aims at maintaining the quality of life of elderly, lowering the incidence of disability and coping with health problems aggravated by aging process itself. Anti-aging medicine is an other popular concept related to aging. It focuses on stopping the aging process, with the efforts aimed in turning back “to the young age”. All around the world is mostly the subject of plastic surgery, cosmetic medicine and complementary and alternative medicine.

Balneology could be related with aging process from three different but interrelated aspects. Firstly, the putative preventive effects of a diversity of balneological factors and interventions might play a role. These beneficial effects can be considered as “anti-aging” effects on the biological and physiological processes which are predominant in the well being of elderly population. Further more they may have also therapeutic effects on the pathological consequences of these processes. Secondly, they might be an effective tool in the prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of the diseases that occurs frequently in elderly. And finally, balneotherapeutics may complement and support other treatment options for elder population.

With these perspectives the evidence about the healthy effects of balneology interventions on the health and wellbeing of elderly populations that obtained after a comprehensive search of the databases will be presented.