



UEMS PRM Section and Board

EUROPEAN UNION OF MEDICAL SPECIALISTS
SECTION OF PHYSICAL AND REHABILITATION MEDICINE
EUROPEAN BOARD OF PHYSICAL AND REHABILITATION MEDICINE

UNION EUROPÉENNE DES MÉDECINS SPÉCIALISTES
SECTION DE MÉDECINE PHYSIQUE ET DE RÉADAPTATION
COLLÈGE EUROPÉEN DE MÉDECINE PHYSIQUE ET DE RÉADAPTATION



Dr. João Grenho
Secretary General of the UEMS

Re: Proposal for creation of a MJC on Medical Balneology

August 5, 2022

Dear Secretary General of the UEMS,

Based on the Article VI.10 (RoP), as UEMS Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine (PRM) Section and Board, we are presenting a request to create a UEMS Multidisciplinary Joint Committee (MJC) on Medical Balneology.

The importance of “balneology” for the specialty of PRM has long been recognized. A Taskforce on Balneology has been established within the UEMS PRM Section almost sixteen years ago, which soon led to the creation of a Balneology Subdivision within the PRM Section. We now think that it is time to propose the creation of a UEMS MJC on Medical Balneology for the reasons explained below.

Medical Balneology is not fully recognized as an independent medical specialty at European level. On the other hand, in many European countries, it is either an independent main specialty (e.g., Turkey, Spain, and Italy) or a so-called competency or additional qualification (e.g., Germany, Austria, Serbia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Portugal, and France). In some European countries (e.g., Poland, Slovak Republic, and Romania), Balneology is included within the specialty of PRM. In other European countries (e.g., The Netherlands, Sweden, and Denmark) Balneology is not recognized as a medical specialization or qualification. It is worth noting that, Medical Balneology is a relevant part of the health systems and taught in medical schools in many European countries (Germany, Austria, Poland, Hungary, Italy and France, and health insurances of such countries refund medical balneological treatments, at least partly. It is noteworthy that evidence is growing on the physiological mechanisms of balneotherapies and their efficacy and cost-effectiveness. (Source: Gutenbrunner C, Bender T, Cantista P, Karagülle Z. *Int J Biometeorol.* 2010;54(5):495-507).

However, this medical field is not represented in the UEMS. We believe that recent scientific evidence and developments in the field warrant the consideration of the relevant UEMS MJC.

Establishing MJC on Medical Balneology will open the way to scientific development of this traditional European medical field and facilitate the cooperation and collaboration of medical balneology with other medical specialties. Balneology will be better introduced to modern medical research and technology. More importantly preparing a training curriculum for Medical Balneology would be possible through such an initiative of creating a MJC on Medical Balneology. Finally, this will lead to a greater integration of balneological therapies in current mainstream medicine and healthcare systems in Europe. Well-established preventative, therapeutic and rehabilitative effects of balneological treatments (balneotherapy, peloidotherapy, hydropinotherapy, inhalation therapy, and other hydrotherapeutic applications) with balneological agents (thermal mineral waters, peloids and gases) can be used as effective (even cost-effective) nonpharmacological interventions for a large patient population of Europe with different health conditions.



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Even though Medical Balneology is connected with nearly all medical disciplines, PRM, Rheumatology, and Dermatology are the closest medical specialties to Balneology.

Regarding the specific criterion of “at least two Sections must declare active participation in MJC”, we would like to inform you that after the decision taken for proposing the creation of a MJC on Medical Balneology at the Executive Committee meeting of the UEMS PRM Section and Board on July 5, 2022, we had the opportunity of contacting the UEMS Section of Rheumatology, the UEMS Section of Orthopaedics and Traumatology, and the UEMS Section and Board of Dermato-Venereology. We would be pleased to inform you about whether they will actively participate in this MJC when we receive their decisions.

In conclusion, medicine is always under an evolution process. All specialties and interventions progressed. Balneology does not differ from the rest of medicine. There is growing scientific research and evidence level lately in this field. We cannot deny or ignore the benefits that Balneology can bring to many patients and to public health. That is why we think that this initiative may contribute to the development of Balneology knowledge, education, research, and good practice.

For all these reasons, the UEMS PRM-Section and Board proposes to establish a UEMS MJC on Medical Balneology.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

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Secretary General of the UEMS PRM Section and Board

On behalf of UEMS PRM Section President, Mauro Zampolini, and the Board President, Nikolaos Barotsis