

## BOOKS AND REVIEWS

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### RENDRE L'HÔPITAL PLUS HUMAIN<sup>1</sup>

In today's world, in which modern technology is developing so quickly, often to the detriment of human values, it seems opportune to stop and think about the quality of life of patients in hospitals and care institutions.

Already several years ago, at the suggestion of the late Professor Eric Martin, then President of the ICRC, the Henry Dunant Institute was asked to study dehumanization in hospitals, to examine the major aspects of the problem and to suggest solutions that would meet with the approval of all concerned.

In autumn 1984, the Henry Dunant Institute published a brochure entitled «Rendre l'hôpital plus humain» (Making Hospitals more humane), which is the work of a commission headed by Professor René Mach and composed of medical experts, practitioners, legal scholars and Red Cross personnel.

The brochure is careful not to form generalizations about the phenomena of hospital dehumanization, but observes that this does exist and is a source of public concern. The brochure limits itself to describing different aspects of the life of hospital patients and presents for each aspect a series of remedies which can be summarized in three key words: information—dialogue—respect.

For many patients, a stay in hospital means separation or even isolation. All the more reason, therefore, that they should receive treatment in the atmosphere of sympathy, understanding, refuge and reassurance they need. Hence the importance of the part played by reception staff, whether professional or voluntary and social welfare personnel. They can ensure that the patient always feels he is being looked after in a caring environment, and that he is given the necessary administrative and therapeutic explanations, be it on his arrival at the hospital or when he leaves.

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<sup>1</sup> *Rendre l'hôpital plus humain*, Henry Dunant Institute, Geneva, September 1984, 39 p., in French and German.

The brochure also advocates that medical studies and internships should not be limited to scientific and medical instruction, but that they should also develop the human side of the doctor-patient relationship. The study also stresses the importance of the role played by chaplains.

The success of a stay in hospital is more a matter of volition than knowledge; it depends very substantially on the active participation of all concerned, whether those giving or those receiving care.

