



## **Why do we need a new definition of health?**

### **Crises of health care systems**

During the last decades health care systems evolved more and more toward a socially unsustainable level that may soon become unbearable. The most visible indicator is the increase in health care costs that may soon lead politicians into unmanageable situations. Even when looking at the details, medicine becomes increasingly problematic. Hospital employees are under continuously mounting pressure. In Switzerland, for example, young physicians work a lot of overtime but are still not able to spend much more than 30% of their time with patients because they need the rest for administration. This undercuts their motivation — these physicians have not studied medicine to go into such a profession. General practitioners are equally unhappy. The government reduced their time to speak with patients, yet the patient-physician interaction is one of the central instruments for helping their patients. Unfortunately, such examples are found all over.

### **A transition of power did not bring the solution**

During the past 70 years medicine has dramatically improved its possibilities of serving patients. Yet it also became more complex and more expensive. Simultaneously, the power in health care has gradually been transferred from physicians to managers and economists. This has had major consequences because for the past 2400 years physicians have been committed to values as expressed by the oath of Hippocrates that has since been adapted time and again (Pledge of Geneva 2017). In contrast, when the economy was penetrated by science, its values were sacrificed for profit maximization. Apparently, medicine did not measure up to its impressive development, yet managers and economists did not either.

### **New level of thinking**

Einstein said: “It is impossible to solve a problem with the same level of thinking that created it.” In essence this means: The crisis of the health care system requires new thinking. Fortunately, this can now be offered by the Meikirch model. This is an innovative definition of health that summarizes the different mechanisms for the improvement or deterioration of health. It may unite all responsible persons in health care, including patients, in a well-described and shared objective or goal, i.e. health. This will focus and empower interprofessional and interdisciplinary cooperation of all the involved persons. Only in this way can the mutual responsibility of physicians, nurses, managers and other involved persons be effected. So far this has not been possible because, up to now, no scientifically valid definition of health has been available; everyone just made up their own.