



Novartis France

Proximology: caring about caregivers

At a glance

Issue

- An aging population, the prevalence of chronic diseases, and budgetary restrictions all point to the importance of focusing on relatives of patients as essential participants for effective healthcare.

Objectives

- Contribute to better awareness and recognition of informal caregivers.
- Understand the link that unites a patient with his/her close relatives.
- Become an ally of patients' families in the fight against disease.

Activities

- Support a new multidisciplinary approach focusing on close relatives: proximology.
- Create a Health and Proximology Department to assess, publicize and initiate services for caregivers.
- Since 2007, creation of a Company Foundation to strengthen this initiative.

Results

- Establishment of a new research area dedicated to the close relatives of patients: proximology.
- Creation of awareness among opinion leaders of the role of close relatives in caring for patients.
- Novel studies and results on specific diseases to support plans and actions for family caregivers.
- Innovative partnerships with health professionals to distinguish Novartis based on its active involvement in proximology.
- Significant contribution to the implementation of relevant services and training.

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As the population ages and a growing proportion of people live with chronic diseases or disabilities, healthcare professionals recognize that not all care takes place in the physician's office or hospital. The home is central to the health and well-being of patients. Since 2001, Novartis France has been working to advance an innovative new discipline – proximology – focusing medical and societal attention on the important role that family members and informal caregivers play in meeting the needs of patients.

As a company, Novartis France is working to expand society's view of healthcare beyond formal structures and medical approaches (even including its products) to take into consideration the family members who are closest to patients in everyday life. Research and education in proximology hold promise for improving patients' health outcomes, compliance, and preventive care as well as helping alleviate the economic burden of chronic diseases.

Like most of the developed world, France is watching its population grow older. In less than 20 years, more than 30 percent of the French population will be over 65 years of age. Many of the chronic diseases and conditions that especially affect elderly people will grow dramatically. This trend poses a major challenge to a healthcare system already operating against a background of constraints on health expenditures.

Novartis France chose to make a difference by addressing this issue, as it does in its business, through scientific study and innovative approaches aimed at enhancing quality of life for patients.

The company has committed resources and people since 2001 to proximology, an emerging field of study. Named from the Latin *proximus*, meaning nearest or closest, proximology refers to the study of patients' close relatives and the vital role that they play in the fight against disease.

Committing to help patients – and their caregivers

Proximology is a multidisciplinary research field that looks at the range of interactions between patients and their close relatives, the environment in the home, involvement of relatives with treatment plans prescribed by health professionals, types of care delivery for specific diseases, and the effects of healthcare systems and policies on care provided by family and friends.

The need for study focuses on two sides of the involvement of informal caregivers:

- On the one hand, close relatives are essential contributors to the quality of life for patients, as well to prevention, daily care routines and treatment compliance. Healthcare systems and policy makers should seek to maximize the benefits from home care and involvement.
- On the other hand, these relatives also need support as caregivers and help with the impact that this commitment has on their lives. Beyond humanistic concerns, paying attention to relatives and valuing their involvement will enable them to stay active for as long as possible.

Novartis France has made a sustained commitment to proximology to address both sides of this equation: the caregivers' role in healthcare, and healthcare's commitment to caregivers.

Expanding medical knowledge and education of families

To incorporate this vision of the expanded role of caregivers into its activities as a healthcare company, Novartis France has developed a Health and Proximology Department and structured the initiative in three main areas:

Research and forecasting – to provide concrete observational and analytical tools for evaluating the family environment and its place in healthcare priorities.

- More than a dozen studies have been conducted to date, investigating the role of close relatives in diseases such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, renal impairment and breast cancer.
- Annual symposiums organized by Novartis France have advanced the consideration of close relatives in terms of care delivery, legal status, companion roles, and comparable situations in Europe.
- These efforts have attracted several experts from the medical and healthcare fields, researchers as well as corporate, political and economic players.

Information and documentation – to distribute reliable and relevant information to health professionals about engaging with patients' close relatives.

- A dedicated website, www.proximologie.com, offers a bibliographic database, a discussion forum and practical advice for close relatives.
- This is regularly supplemented by the distribution of "La Lettre de la Proximologie" (Proximology Newsletter), a unique journal in France that today has over 4 000 subscribers.
- Novartis has also supported the publication of reference publications and books: "Réinventer la solidarité de proximité" (2005) (Reinvent close support), "Regards Croisés sur l'entourage" (2006) (Perspectives of close relatives), "Manuel de Proximologie" (2007) (Proximology Manual).

Services and training – to publicize assistance and respite solutions for family caregivers.

- Contact and permanent monitoring with health professionals has led to support for more than 50 innovative initiatives for close relatives.
- Resources and advice for close relatives have been developed, mainly taking the form of Internet applications such as "la Maison virtuelle" (virtual house), which provides home improvement advice at www.proximologie.com for people living with a chronically ill person. There are also practical guides aimed at making the daily lives of caregivers easier.
- Training has been developed with the aim of encouraging the integration of close relatives in treatment and care, including the creation of continuous training modules for caregivers.

Since 2007, Novartis Foundation France also has committed to these efforts by placing close relatives of patients at the heart of its objectives. Foundation activities focus on three initiatives:

- Proximology Academy, a production and distribution platform for knowledge in the field.
- Regular survey information on the opinions, expectations and needs of family caregivers.
- Support and proximity training, enabling the promotion of innovative initiatives to the close relatives of patients.

Business case

The commitment of Novartis to support the family caregivers of patients is directly connected to the values of the group: innovation, responsibility and performance.

Consistent with our innovative approaches to creating new products for the fight against disease, Novartis is helping pioneer the field of proximology to help society create new ways of improving the quality of life and outcomes for patients and their families. This commitment demonstrates our desire to be a responsible partner in the social and societal environment. As we explore new approaches, Novartis also is strengthening its business in the fight against chronic diseases.

In France, this commitment helps to distinguish Novartis from its competitors, positioning the company in a social and health area yet to be explored. Engaging on this issue allows us to form new relationships with our stakeholders: policy makers, patient associations, journalists, and health professionals. Among the specific benefits of our involvement in proximology:

- This initiative demonstrates the close alliance of Novartis with doctors in the fight against disease, beyond its product offerings and discussion of specific treatments.
- We have committed to several partnerships with valuable allies for activities in research, human support, studies, and training.
- The proximology activities help Novartis build a continuing dialogue with health authorities and medical and para-medical professionals.
- Novartis is developing new internal expertise in the changing environment of the healthcare system, which will benefit its business in the future.
- Novartis can offer its partners a recognized, unique and sought-after expertise in a very pressing and current issue for society.

About Novartis France

Novartis in France (2 800 employees) had a turnover of 1375 million euro in 2006. The activities of the subsidiary are based on four divisions: Novartis Pharma, Sandoz (generics), Novartis Consumer Health and Novartis Vaccines and Diagnostics. The Pharma Division, managed by Dr Jean-Christophe Tellier, markets brand medicines in 8 therapeutic areas: cardiovascular, oncology, neuroscience, pneumology, transplantation/immunology, infectology and ophthalmology. Novartis Consumer Health is represented in 3 business units: Novartis Animal Health, Novartis Family Health and CIBA Vision.

Contacts

- Hugues Joublin, Head of Communications, Novartis France
Email: hugues.joublin@novartis.com
- Patrick Bonduelle, Head of External Relations & Brand Communications, Novartis France
Email: patrick.bonduelle@novartis.com

