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ABOUT THE FUTURE

During the last two years, Umberto Veronesi's words kept my faith high, like a mantra, like a light that could guide the humanity out of the worst nightmare it has experienced since the end of the World War II. As it did to many people, the two years of pandemic shook up my emotions. I felt impotence and frustration; feared for a world in which the enormous progresses of the last decades toward universal healthcare, justice, poverty reducing and climate crisis fight could begin going backward.



The patient is not just a number to whom we give care. It has to be a person in the first place; for me that's the basic motto in healthcare.

RNDR. MONIKA POLANOVÁ, Head of the Clinical Microbiology Department, National Institute of Tuberculosis, Lung Diseases and Thoracic Surgery, Vyšné Hágy

It was then, at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic (declared by WHO on 11 March 2020), that I decided not to take things for granted, and had started to document the precious work done by women in the healthcare sector. We all know, and openly say, that women are the most affected when adverse events hit our world. However, women are also the backbone of the society, supporting families and providing care to children and elderly people, while they also constitute the foundation and core of our healthcare system.

The beautiful thing about photojournalism is that during these two years of coronavirus in Slovakia, it gave me access to the extraordinary job done by the women working in the healthcare sector: in hospitals, clinics, policlinics, universities, companies and even in our homes and streets. Through photographs, which are sometime worth a thousand words, and interviewing inspiring women, I have been able to capture the essence of their work and struggle, their stories and achievements, their ideas and goals for a sustainable future. I have witnessed them sacrificing their lives, every day, in order to save the lives of perfect strangers, a profound experience that gave me hope for a better future.

I have collected my documentary work in a hardcover book, *About The Future: 51 Stories of Women For The Future of Healthcare (51 príbehov žien pre budúcnosť zdravotníctva)*.



The idea of showing the importance and position of women in medicine and health care is not only current, but also the most necessary one.

DOC. MUDR. EVA GONCALVESOVÁ, CSC., FESC, FHFA, Head of Heart Transplant Department, Clinic of Cardiology at NUSCH, First Female President of the Slovak Society of Cardiology

Throughout its 264 pages, with more than 160 photos and 51 interviews, each woman tells an inspirational story, able to guide us toward the

As Umberto Veronesi, luminary Italian professor of oncology, who died six years ago at 90 put it: *"Ignorance and lack of awareness of the good and evil can no longer constitute an alibi for human beings of the third millennium. We can't do without the good and the life. The longest and best possible"*.

future we want, while pushing to achieve good health and a good life, which are indispensable. I strongly believe that the female thoughts are not only necessary but essential. And, as Amartya Sen, Indian economist and philosopher, recipient of the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences, said, *"empowering women is key to building a future we want."*

Listening to their stories, watching them while working during the last two years, it has been an honor and a chance to contribute to open their doors to everybody of good will. Whereas each book lives its own life, I hope that my last book will convey the resilience and struggle of these women, and it will be able to inspire and guide the current and future generations.

There is a Senegalese story that I find exemplary. One day, a huge fire breaks out in the forest. The animals are there waiting for the fire to die out. But no, the fire is gaining more and more strength. Then the animals begin to run away from the burning forest. The last one who remains is the lion, because he is the king of animals, because as king he has the duty to leave last. Then there are no more animals and the lion begins to run out of the burning forest.

As he is leaving, he sees a hummingbird, a tiny bird, which has a tiny drop of water on its chest, flying towards the fire. The lion says to him: "Everything is on fire there, what are you going to do?" And the hummingbird, showing the drop of water, says: *"I'm going to do my part."*



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We all should do like the hummingbird, and like the 51 inspiring, strong and determined women I have met, who have shared their stories with us all: believe that even a single drop of water is useful and is our share to change things.