

Ventegodt S, Morad M and Merrick J. Challenge of chronic disease is the challenge of understanding life. The social medicine of our time. Rapid response, BMJ 18 March 2005.

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▼ **Challenge of chronic disease is the challenge of understanding life. The social medicine of our time**

Søren Ventegodt, Mohammed Morad and Joav Merrick (18 March 2005)

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18 March
2005



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EDITOR---This message is in response to the recent paper in BMJ (1) on how the NHS can improve and support the growing number of people with long term conditions (1). We believe that the challenge of chronic disease is the challenge of understanding life itself. It is well known that in fex Denmark nearly every second person has a chronic disease, a state of suffering arising from a combination of poor health, poor quality of life and poor ability of functioning.

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To only look in isolation at poor health and not the whole triad is to ignore the coherence of man to his universe (2-4), and ignoring this coherence makes it impossible for us to alleviate the chronic disease.

To see this schematically, poor quality of life arises from poor functioning, which again arises from poor health, which again arises from poor quality of life... This evil circle can only be broken, if one understands what creates life at its foundation.

We need an integrative science to explore that. We need our medicine to include such an understanding. We need medicine to go deeper, and to see man clearer. We need a social medicine that is relevant to our times.

Medical science needs a deeper understanding of human existence. Please follow us in this quest. Alleviating chronic disease takes a

radical change of perspective of life at large, not only among physicians, but among everybody in our society.

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Competing interests: None declared