Balneotherapy, defined as the medical use of hydrothermal resources as part of a care or prevention strategy, has long been embedded in the health systems of Latin and central European countries. It’s a cultural, medical, and economic reality, accounting for over one million direct and indirect jobs throughout EU and attracting 5 million patients yearly. Although there are some common features to spa cares in countries engaged in balneotherapy (rehabilitation and treatment of chronic diseases as the main purpose, required medical prescription, follow-up by a physician over the stay . . .), there is no standardized treatment. Moreover, the funding of balneotherapy varies from zero financing to more generous schemes where state-controlled funds are allocated to patients. One common trend is for sure: due to spiralling health costs and hefty budget deficits, the efficacy of balneotherapy has come under scrutiny. For having failed to establish its actual medical benefit, balneotherapy has endured adverse public measures over recent years. In this doom context, the case of France calls for a specific focus as spa companies embraced 10 years ago a successful strategy of overall assessment of balneotherapy through the creation and funding of a specific research association that ultimately secured the reimbursement rate of cares.

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