I am Fernanda Morrone and I have been teaching for twelve years at the Pontifical Catholic University of Porto Alegre, which has about 3,000 enrolled students. I am the director of the Pharmacology Laboratory, where 25 doctoral, masters and undergraduate level students work, as well as a number of other professors. We do research on new pharmacological treatments.

In a culture that is marked by competition and individualism, I try to teach the students the importance of establishing a relationship with their patients and of collaborating with colleagues.

Therefore, I feel that I have to be the first one to live this out. Every day, when I go to the university, I know that I am going to listen to everyone, without making distinctions, by putting the other person before my own interests. I try to share ideas with the other professors, as well as financial resources, and this way of operating is contagious. In the laboratory, the students work not only their own research projects, but each one helps the others with their projects when needed. In this way, the articles that are published are a result of this collective effort, which however does not exclude the personal responsibility that each one has in them.

I try not only to teach theory, but to build a lived experience with the students in the laboratory, that is, to deepen the collective aspect of the acquisition of knowledge. In a recent project on the use of medicines in an older population, we were able to study not only the pharmacological implications but also the other aspects, such as the difficulties facing the
older adult, the lack of access to medicines and other aspects that violate respect for the person, and we tried to also study how we could heal these difficulties, especially the importance of “caring for.” This caused us to think that most treatment modalities need further work on their ethical approaches to life.

To this regard, in one of the disciplines that I teach at the undergraduate level, I tried to bring a concrete project ahead (“Atenção Farmacêutica”) with the students; one that puts them in touch with society and makes certain values stand out, such as the dignity of the human person, the importance of working as a team... and above all, to already create here among us, real relationships despite our diversity.

We decided to bring the students to a Social Center close by the University, in a poor neighbourhood on the outskirts of the city (a favela), where there are different health problems (especially infective diseases) created by poor social conditions and the lack of economic means of the population that lives there.

In the favela we found very precarious living conditions (alcoholism, delinquency, drugs, lack of family connections and healthcare facilities) and with the students - some of whom come from well-to-do families - we were able to elaborate on the meaning of illness and of cures by following these persons throughout their treatment plans, giving assistance according to their posology, explaining the benefits and the eventual collateral effects of the medicines they were taking. Together with the students, we were able to publish the initial results of this formative experience in scientific reviews. This experience was also enriching for me, making me more aware of my responsibility in forming young students to values, and not hiding from them
the difficulties that they will face in the society that they will then have to work in.

Respect and bonds of friendship have grown among everyone - students, professors and members of the health team alike - and each one has felt appreciated for his/her work and also stimulated to improve. In addition, today in the new plan of study for the Pharmacy Program, a new discipline has been included called “Care of the Patient.”

Currently, we are applying this method also in the Pharmacy located on Campus, where the students learn “to listen” and to resolve the possible doubts that can arise in the population that they serve.