In patient or on paper?

During the evolution of humankind, revolutionary discoveries (like gravity from Newton with the apple tree), new techniques and medicines came from the field and from life experience. That is how we learnt about plants and their various benefits in our life, and this gave us some of the drugs we use today.

Recently, this modality of learning has been changing, it seems, and we are starting to see a big gap in the treatments we are using between what works on paper according to marketing materials, and what works for our patients in practice. It may be because while research is being conducted, the human factor or actual environment in which the potential future products will be used is not taken fully into consideration; it is not always easy to replicate the clinical environment in the laboratory. Therefore, we need to be reminded that it is not accurate to consider the laboratory results sufficient to start manufacturing, promoting and eventually using some products that may later be discovered to have some major deficiencies.

Denying the simple rules of treatment just for the sake of marketing is not right. Our only goal should be to deliver the best treatment for our patient, bearing in mind that a miracle product is not yet (and may never be) available and that each product has its limitations and indications. Doctors should understand this, and companies as well.

Clinical results should be our gold standard for any treatment, since what may work on paper and in statistical analysis may, sadly, fail in a patient.