These are the expressions that are generally said almost automatically at this time of the year. Saying them is easy, and is polite.

The underlying meaning of “Merry Christmas” is probably to spend the night of 24 December with your family in joy, which is great, with an abundant table, which is not reprehensible when not frequent, and with distribution of presents around midnight. At that momento, you can also take the opportunity to value your life and decide to make changes that include your lifestyle, thus contributing to the mentioned Happy New Year, which is closer after this night that should not be ephemeral.

The underlying meaning of “Happy New Year” includes good health; indeed, in Portugal, it frequently goes together with expressions that mean “particularly with good health” or “the important thing is to be healthy.”

Our scientific association, of which the Board of Directors I am honoured to preside, has been disseminating, through various means and never undermining new opportunities, how to prevent the catastrophe that is stroke, and how to minimise its consequences.

Therefore, in the wishes of Happy New Year that I hereby direct to the whole Portuguese population, I appeal you to be alert and have a proactive behaviour to fight stroke, which is the 1st cause of death and impairment in Portugal, and accomplish positive results in favour of a truly good quality of life with good health. With this goal achieved, we will certainly have a Happy 2009.

Happy New Year