

Letters to the editor

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Harassment and discrimination in medical students

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Dear editor:

The quality of life of medical students has been studied many times, highlighting high levels of sleep disorders and burnout syndrome [1],[2]. Regarding the latter, a recent study showed a high prevalence of this condition, highlighting it as a public health problem that affects a large number of medical students. It also stated that academic and care stress are solely responsible for the presence of this syndrome in the population studied [3],[4].

However, one of the issues that is scarcely covered in Chilean reality is the abuse, harassment or discrimination experienced by students, interns, and residents of medicine every day.

A recent meta-analysis concluded that there is a high prevalence of harassment and discrimination among physicians in training, a situation that has remained unchanged in the last times [5]. Other reports indicate that their medical tutors mainly caused the aggression, especially in the cycles of surgical practice [6].

An experience published in the *Revista Médica de Chile* in 2006 conveyed the reality of medical students at the University of Chile, highlighting that 86.1% of students during their training received two or more abusive incidents. Likewise, 78.1% of the students who suffered abuse reported effects on their mental health and their image of the doctor, being so severe in some cases that 32.2% of them thought about leaving the career [7].

At the moment it is necessary to quantify the problem in our country, since it is undoubtedly present, however, very few denounce it. It is necessary that the relevant institutions, universities or even the Ministry of Health, take control of the matter in order to improve the students' quality of life, recognizing that many times the role and action of the medical student may be necessary in the correct management of patients.

Along with the above, it is necessary to insist that any form of abuse, whether physical, sexual, moral or academic, could affect the behavior of the student in multiple spheres [8], distressing even his future professional performance, explaining in part some of the reprehensible practices that some professionals exert. This type of aggression not only affects the sufferer, but also violates the relationship that the student maintains with other professionals, auxiliary staff, and patients. Being aware of the above, both parties can favor their activities, the student in their learning and the teacher in their teaching, building a pleasant and dignified environment for everyone.

Notes

From the editor

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