



Letter to the editor: Institutional factors and the teaching staff have an impact on the research of university medical students

Carta a la editora: Los factores institucionales y el claustro docente inciden en la investigación de estudiantes universitarios de medicina

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Madam editor,

We recently read with great interest the work 'Medical education for undergraduate research: Proposals from the experience of two national student conferences of the Universidad de Valparaíso' by Cabrera-Ubilla et al. The authors found that internal medicine, pediatrics and surgery were more represented. Regarding evaluating the submissions, the section with the lowest rating was the discussion in case reports. Likewise, the papers with the highest scores in the evaluated items came from private universities [1]. On the other hand, the authors describe the relevance of increasing the participation of medical students in the early training cycles and involving them in research processes [1].

Based on the above, addressing certain institutional and teaching aspects is necessary, which may significantly limit this objective aimed at promoting scientific research in medical programs.

Although students show positive attitudes toward research, they do not receive recognition. Personal factors (lack of time and skills) and institutional factors (funding, facilities, access to medical journals and databases) have been described as the main barriers [2] to improving formative research.

With this in mind, it has been proposed to create a system that includes mentoring programs and the provision of resources to increase student participation in research [3]. This approach aims to improve the organizational structure by providing more funding, facilitating access to databases and scientific journals, optimizing facilities and recognizing students' scientific work. However, it is necessary to understand that many universities do not have the means for a strong research and innovation system.

Consequently, the mentoring process presents an additional challenge, given that the teaching faculty oversees the research-focused modules throughout the professional career, so perhaps a change in the curriculum focusing on developing scientific skills could optimize the recruitment process of research teachers [4]. However, it has been observed that many university teachers lack the research competencies, attitudes and skills to teach students research methods and an understanding of high-impact journals [5]. In addition, incorporating research studies into undergraduate courses could enhance students' experiences and learning [6], generating new abilities and skills in literacy, research, technology, culture, science, law, education, and pedagogy, among others.

Considering the above, it should be regarded that research is a crucial and indisputable element in higher education

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institutions and that fostering formative research is part of their main tasks. Therefore, a less 'utopian' and more objective perspective according to institutional guidelines, resource limitations, teaching staff and social reality is necessary if research processes are to be improved.

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