

Training of Emergency Physicians

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This issue of EMERGENCIAS includes articles that exemplify the combination of global, European and national levels involved in the training of physicians for the discipline of Emergency Medicine (EM). The International Federation for Emergency Medicine¹ (IFEM) contributes with an article on a model curriculum for medical student training in EM, and the European Society for Emergency Medicine (EuSEM) reports on the new European Core Curriculum for training in the specialty of EM in Europe².

We would like to highlight the fact that all medicine must rest on a solid academic base, including clinical and administrative skills, with continuous research and education^{3,5}. We believe that medical undergraduate education around the world should include foundation teaching of EM and that graduate physicians must be capable of demonstrating their ability to manage an emergency in the exercise of their professional duties.

During 2008, Prof. Francesco Della Corte performed a pan-European survey on the situation of EM teaching at the undergraduate level in Europe, yielding 132 responses from 33 countries. The results showed that there was no formal EM education for undergraduates in 14 of these 33 countries. A specific undergraduate course on EM was more likely to be offered in countries where EM is recognised as a specialty.

For his reason, and recognising that the challenge of meeting the need for high-quality worldwide EM delivery starts in medical schools, we welcome the IFEM curriculum that represents the standards adopted by all academic programs.

In a global situation characterised by lack of resources, it is crucial that all national and international initiatives strive to pull in the same direction in order to facilitate the development of better quality healthcare. The field of EM is growing

rapidly and aims for high standards of care that must be homogenous, ethical and strongly accredited.

EuSEM comprises a federation of 24 European national societies devoted to EM, including SEMES, through which more than 15,000 physicians are ideally represented. The main purpose of EuSEM is to promote similar standards of EM care throughout Europe and the establishment of EM as a primary specialty in each country, based on a common core curriculum. The core curriculum^{4,8} was written by a EuSEM Task Force with a representative from each of the National Societies. The documents starts with a preface which confirms the EuSEM policy document that EM is "a medical specialty based on the knowledge and skills required for the prevention, diagnosis and management of urgent and emergency aspects of illness and injury affecting patients of all age groups, with a full spectrum of undifferentiated physical and behavioural disorders. It is a specialty in which time is crucial."

The curriculum presents six core competencies expected of an Emergency Physician: patient care, underlining the need to provide emergency care to an unpredictable number of undifferentiated patients; medical knowledge and clinical skills, listing the body of knowledge required in a system-based and symptom-based manner; communication, collaboration and inter-personal skills; professionalism, and competence in ethical and legal issues ; organisational planning and service management skills; education and research.

The document ends with indications on the structure, duration, standards and evolution of specialist training in EM in Europe. These recommendations are based on international standards^{6,7} and on the Charter on the training of European medical specialists by the Union Europeene des Medecins Specialistes⁹ (UEMS).

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UEMS is a non-government organisation promoting quality and standards of training whose purpose includes harmonising care and promoting the free movement of physicians in Europe. A medical specialty listed in the Doctors' Directive as being recognised in more than one third of European member states may seek the establishment of a separate section within EUEMS. Three years ago (not the case now), EM fell just short of that requirement but, following a EuSEM request, UEMS established a multidisciplinary joint committee (MJC) for EM. This committee includes the Secretary-General of UEMS, several EuSEM representatives and a representative from each of the following UEMS sections: Internal Medicine, Anaesthesiology, General Surgery, Orthopaedics and Traumatology, Geriatric Medicine, Paediatric Medicine and the Permanent Working Group of European Junior Doctors. The MJC for EM amended and approved the European Curriculum, and in April 2009, it was presented and unanimously approved by the General Council of UEMS, a body comprising the presidents of 52 sections. This represents a milestone for EM in Europe, because now the European Curriculum is the official standard for the specialty program, and has attained the highest level of recognition.

A good example of rigorous training for the emergent EM specialty is the program developed in Spain¹¹ by the Promotion Commission of the Specialty of Emergency Medicine within what was then called the Ministry of Health and Consumption, based on a previous model developed by SEMES¹² which was followed by another made in collaboration with the Spanish Society of General Practitioners (SEMERGEN)¹³. We know that there has been active promotion in Spain for some years to reach this final point, and that SEMES actively participated in developing the European Curriculum. Therefore, the President, the SEMES board of directors and the Editor of EMERGENCIAS decided to translate this into Spanish (European Curriculum in Emergency Medicine) and

publish it in this issue. The EuSEM Federation of National Societies considers this as important recognition of an extensive multinational effort.

In addition, the recent statement by the Spanish Minister of Health¹⁰ announcing that the first medical residents will begin specialist training in EM as from the year 2011 is a source of great satisfaction and ratifies our conviction that EM should be a primary medical specialty. We are confident that we are on a road of no return, not only in Europe, but throughout the world.

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