



IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE EDUCATION OF MEDICAL STUDENTS IN PERU

IMPACTO DEL COVID-19 EN LA EDUCACIÓN DE LOS ESTUDIANTES DE MEDICINA DEL PERÚ

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Mr. Editor

The pandemic caused by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome 2 (SARS-CoV-2) caused by the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a highly contagious disease that represents an emergency worldwide. On May 22, 2020 we counted 4,993,470 confirmed cases and 327,738 deaths among 188 countries/regions⁽¹⁾, at the same time there already existed 111,698 positive cases and 3,244 deaths in Peru already existed⁽²⁾; data that will continue to expand and that places thousands of lives in danger, affecting states, municipalities and public and private institutions. In that regard, stricter measures are being taken with the obligatory quarantine, isolation and social distancing management, which directly affects all activities that involve in person gatherings.

This alarming situation is not indifferent to the medical students. It is of interest to evaluate the COVID-19 impact, which has significantly changed and interrupted the traditional educational process with theory and practice classes in medical education, obligating medical schools to take rapid and desperate measures to mitigate its effects at the educational level.

In order to invest its negative effects into theoretical classes, medical schools from different countries have already implemented technological measures with virtual classes throughout different platforms proving good results⁽³⁾.

In Peru they have also shown to be an effective and beneficial solution since the videoconference from one class can be as effective as an in-person conference⁽⁴⁾, but the habit of having access to a traditional education and the little human contact that characterizes this new educational methodology may cause a decrease in student participation during the class development as well as the little understanding of material that is virtually provided⁽⁵⁾. On the other hand, today's students are used to technology, expect adequate effectiveness and integrity, and also expect that their instructors and educative materials integrate seamlessly in their learning⁽⁶⁾. This implies a great responsibility for their professors and institutions to meet their expectations and achieve effective teaching in these uncertain times.

Likewise, one of the pillars in the education of medical students is the practice area, achieving a better learning model in a hospital setting, the same which has been drastically affected in Peru. This becomes a difficult challenge for medical schools to overcome since the implementation and development of more complex modules online include simulations, virtual labs or interactive case presentations that require more time and resources⁽⁷⁾, this already represents a defiance for the pedagogical methodology.

Considering the risk of new COVID-19 outbreaks, the right moment to return to in-person classes must be analyzed carefully. Therefore, we stress the importance that medical schools should strengthen their teaching strategies in pandemic times, as well as take into account the training in biosafety measures and the management of infected patients to guarantee the safety of medical students that will be in direct contact with patients when they return to their clinical practice.

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