

***PRIVATE UNIVERSITY AND THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION***

In Colombia, since 1992, when Act 30 of 1992 was sanctioned, there has been a major proliferation of institutions and programs devoted to all areas of knowledge. This situation is the result of the fact that this Act gives full autonomy to higher education institutions for the creation of new programs.

More specifically in medicine, this trend is evident in the creation of both undergraduate and graduate studies. Prior to the enactment of this Act, there were just 21 medical schools in Colombia, of which 11 were public and 10 private in nature, with a total 26,365 student population. Six years later, there are 42 schools, 13 of which are public, and the rest have been created by private institutions, indicating that medical training has concentrated in this sector.

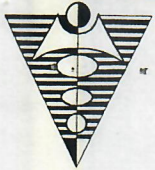
This proliferation of medical schools in such a short time has a negative impact on the quality of the human resources that are being trained. On the basis of visits made by the Evaluation Division to some of these new programs, the following aspects can be singled out :

1. Most schools have been opened in small towns lacking the required academic and health care resources to have an adequate support guaranteeing high quality medical training.
2. The human resources recruited as faculty, is not adequately trained in teaching and, therefore, teaching does not implement the methodological innovations now applied to develop and adequate teaching-training program. Although some programs have experienced clinicians as faculty members, this not



necessarily guarantees that they be good teachers. The difficulty to find good teachers is more critical in basic sciences, directly affecting the training of medical resources.

3. In some instances, physical facilities do not meet the required conditions for a medical school. This means inadequate facilities are being used as laboratories, amphitheatres, and libraries. Many institutions that have created new programs lack a university campus, have been installed in buildings not originally destined to house a university.
4. In most new medical schools there is an evident and serious lack of a library that will support in both volume and quality, the inquiry needs of teachers and students. The number of journals and periodicals is scant.
5. The proliferation of programs has had a negative impact on the requirements for applicant selection which are now more flexible and lenient and will evidently affect the quality of future human resources graduating from these schools. Literature indicates that good student quality is directly related to the selection criteria used.
6. Some of the recently created programs lack tertiary care hospitals meeting adequate requirements to serve as a good setting for the clinical training of students. The concept of the in training-service concept, where there was



mutual cooperation and support between both sectors, has become distorted to be ruled by economic and exclusively contractual patterns.

7. Because of both the lack of strict selection criteria, and the distortion of the in training-service concept, some programs have brought about a massification of training represented in extremely large groups of students, with the consequent negative impact in the quality of training provided.

From the legal viewpoint, ASCOFAME cannot do anything to prevent these new programs from being created, the National Constitution of Colombia, does not allow it; however, it is developing a series of programs for medical training to be given with responsibility and within high quality standards. All its present member medical schools (24 in total) conduct self-evaluation processes for accreditation based on minimal requirements and quality standards, allowing ASCOFAME to exert control and surveillance over its members. High complexity services, many of which are university training centers, are also being assessed.

The Association has it as its policy - as ruled and supported by its Council of Directors- not to admit new programs as institutional members until they have not proven the quality of their graduates.