

ROLE OF STUDENTS OF MEDICINE IN THE PROGRESS OF PUBLIC HEALTH IN LATIN AMERICA.

ROL DE LOS ESTUDIANTES DE MEDICINA EN EL AVANCE DE LA SALUD PÚBLICA EN LATINOAMÉRICA

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Dear Publisher:

According to the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), Public Health is a society's organized effort, mostly through its public institutions, to improve, promote, protect and restore the population's health by collective actions. ¹ Following this line, the medical practice and education must leave the classroom and hospitals and reach those places where the cultural, social and economic reality will not allow it.

In Latin American the development of these collective actions have become exclusively student's initiatives, with no intention to undervalue the governmental institutions, but understanding that such actions are stronger and more credible every day. ² Students have created a body in 1986 in Valparaíso, Chile, named 'Feracion Latinoamericana de Sociedades Científicas de Estudiantes de Medicina FELSOCEN. This is a non-governmental organization, scientific, non-partisan and non-for-profit. Its general goal is to elevate the scientific level of undergraduate students by promoting scientific research and ongoing medical training aimed to the community. ³

Public health's objectives and the mission of this organization are similar, and more are the activities that back it up like the communitarian interventions named 'Intervención Rural de Investigación y Saneamiento (IRIS)'. 'Campamento Interdisciplinario Regional de Investigación y Servicio (CIRIS) and the 'Campamento Universitario Multidisciplinario de Investigación y Servicio (CUMIS), among others. ⁴

In Colombia, there are around 5 to 10 interventions to vulnerable communities, both regional and national. This projects are implemented through the Asociación de Sociedades Científicas de Estudiantes de Medicina de Colombia ASCEMCOL that is part of the FELSOCEN. This organization also helps official organizations such as the national army and the Ministry of Health. This provides students with practice and knowledge that acquire during these events.

It cannot be denied that the impact and the benefits of these projects are immeasurable, both for students and the organizations. Furthermore, one should mention the valuable information that has been acquired through scientific research in the vulnerable populations. This information helps create future public politics that improve the population's life quality as well as its long term health.

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