

Challenges in teaching, research and dental care performance in times of COVID-19

Retos en el desempeño docente, investigativo y asistencial estomatológico en tiempos de COVID-19

 OPEN ACCESS

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Dear readers: Primary health care is a strategy aimed at promoting health, as well as preventing and curing diseases in families, communities and individuals through actions in healthy and sick individuals^{1,2}.

As an indissoluble part of the National Health System and its vision, there is dentistry care, which has achieved oral health goals compared to developed countries and human resources with a high scientific preparation, which is internationally recognized³.

Comprehensive dental care for the population presents a broad framework in the development of Primary Health Care (PHC), since Dentistry is closely related to the Ge-

neral Practitioner, due to the specific characteristics of dental care, with a broad content of primary care and with more than 90 % of an outpatient nature².

Due to their professional profile, dentists, technologists and technicians must contribute to the community health care, and they are able to demonstrate leadership within the health team, for decision-making and the formulation of healthy public policies^{4,5}.

This makes scientific knowledge and updating essential not only in technical aspects but also in matters of public health, social sciences, behavioral sciences; as well as in bioethical and legal principles, so that the commitment to social well-being is reinforced^{4,5}.

During the current pandemic generated by COVID-19, Dentistry has been limited in its clinical actions to reduce the risk of contagion, which has also affected the teaching of this specialty.

Since the first cases appeared in the country, the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Public Health directed the immediate implementation of distance education for all educational levels. In medical universities, the students started an active research, Covid-19 screening, with an evaluative nature -considered as in service-training activities⁶.

Distance education has represented an interesting proposal for the appropriation of theoretical knowledge in the training of Dentistry students; but a sufficient amount of practical face-to-face hours with simulation models (phantoms) or clinical training with real patients has not been a valid option; this constitutes a concern that reaches international repercussions, since manual skills and clinical-practical skills are acquired in the day by day with the patient, a scenario that cannot be conceived in the current situation⁷.

With the reduction in attendance and care burden, it is possible to allocate more time to scientific research and participation in events, which have also migrated to digital platforms.

During the training of Dentistry students, the development of their scientific skills is as important as that of their clinical skills, since knowledge of the scientific method and health research is very useful in Dentistry care. Student scientific activity is an important way to prepare future professionals in research methods, promoting the education of values and preparation to address their scientific concerns⁸.

In compliance with the isolation measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and with the use of digital communication platforms, the First National Virtual Scientific Conference of MorOdonto 2021 was developed, convened by Morón Medical School in Ciego de Ávila province.

The event took place between February 9th and 24th of this year, with the participation of students and professionals of Medical Sciences from 13 provinces and the special municipality of Isla de la Juventud. A total of 190 papers were presented, with 53 awards. As part of the scientific activities of the day, 4 virtual courses were taught. In this way, the MorOdonto 2021 conference fostered the debate and interaction of its participants, as a space for scientific-research dissemination and updating on important aspects of Dentistry.

The pandemic generated by COVID-19 has altered the performance and teaching of Dentistry, however there is evidence that it is possible to generate new strategies and take advantage of information and communication technologies to maintain education and student scientific activity. Holding virtual scientific events generates greater accessibility and enhances investigative skills.

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