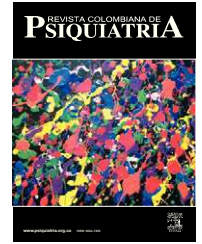




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Editorial

The Importance of Continuing Education

La importancia de la educación continua

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Quality in healthcare for the population is a key element in healthcare systems. Unfortunately, in Colombia it may be one of the most neglected, perhaps because the priority since the implementation of Law 100 on health has been extending coverage. This neglect has led to incalculable costs in lives and in complications in patient care. Current policies —such as the uncontrollable growth of faculties of medicine and the increase in doctors that are graduated from them without appropriate training for the practice of their profession, the rise in postgraduate quotas with the disproportionate pursuit of the universities to increase the cost of enrolment without comprehensive educational processes, the lack of a system for certification and recertification of the professionals in the various clinical and surgical specialties, the need for structured programmes for continuing education from those directly responsible, faculties of medicine and scientific associations and the desire on the part of the different institutions that provide healthcare to use «cheap labour»— are merely a few of the many reasons behind the poor quality of healthcare attention for our population.

It is time for each of the entities involved in the system to assume its responsibilities: the Ministry of Health and Education, with solid processes of monitoring, control and certification; the faculties of medicine, with high-quality programmes in place and accredited that provide comprehensive training to all those graduated from them; and the scientific

associations, by establishing continuing education programmes for their members.

The Columbia Psychiatric Association/*Asociación Colombiana de Psiquiatría* is still in time to do so, it has all the inputs needed for this, and its online presence through its portal could be a source of ongoing training with courses, forums and symposia on the various areas of knowledge (psychopharmacology, psychopathology, clinical psychology/psychiatry and psychotherapies could be some of these). The Columbia Psychiatric Journal/*REVISTA COLOMBIANA DE PSIQUIATRÍA* represents another important means of training, especially in spreading knowledge from the various centres of mental health research in the country. Likewise, the regional and national congresses held in Colombia with the collaboration of the Association are an important source of updating and extending scientific knowledge. Furthermore, the implementation of a system of academic credits and periodic assessments by the Association's scientific committee is but one of these initial proposals that has to be worked on so that they can be implemented in a coherent and structured way.

The Association and its Board of Directors have been working on the majority of these objectives. We must make a firm commitment to turn them into realities once and for all; we have been an example for many scientific associations in the tasks undertaken and an initiative in this respect cannot be left as a mere attempt.