

Scientific output in Dentistry: a look toward the undergraduate in Latin America.

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One of the main functions of the schools related to the health sciences is to develop research that solves the health problems that affect the population. To achieve this goal it is necessary to train professionals with solid knowledge in scientific research, critical thinking and data analysis; however, in many Latin American dentistry schools, the student teaching-learning process focuses fully on clinical-care activity.

A study on the inclusion of research training in the stomatology program of 18 Latin American universities, reported that in only six there is a well-defined explicit goal of research training of future stomatologists.¹ Additionally there is a lack of adequate stimulation within the university environment so that research results culminate in publication, and, on the contrary, there is a culture of "*research, but not publication*".²

This, together with further limitations,³ has led to the low student scientific production (SSP) from undergraduate programs currently evident in Latin America.

The SSP is a clear source of future scientists who will continue the scientific research path in a postgraduate program. Greater production in science by undergraduate students would improve their scientific communication skills that are of importance when considering further studies at the masters or doctorate level, when these competences should be already formed and at ideal conditions for their enhancement.

In reversing this situation, one of the core issues would be to rethink university curricula repositioning scientific research at the center of student training.³ Likewise, it would be very favorable to create a Latin American *Scientific Society of Dentistry Students* (SOCLEO in Spanish) that would bring together the student societies that exist in the different universities of Latin America and that would organize annual scientific meetings where students can share and provide feedback on the results of their scientific research.

We must mention that the *Student Scientific Societies* are an excellent medium for the training of young researchers as well as being the seedbed of future scientists. These societies have emerged from student groups that, attracted by scientific research and with a continuing effort in raising their academic output, come together as

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a nonpartisan, non-profit team to generate science and encourage more students to participate in research.

In addition, it would be beneficial for said Society to have an official dissemination body that, under the

title of *Latin American Journal of Dentistry Students (Revista Científica Latinoamericana de Estudiantes de Odontología)*, would constitute the publication par excellence of the research carried out by the students.

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