

EDITORIAL

The influence and leadership of the *Escuela de Salud Pública de México* in Mexican health

At the end of the revolution, the sanitary project was a cornerstone of the creation of the Mexican State, which included the need to train physicians who served as sanitary delegates at the borders and seaports, and later in the states, as well as technicians who held positions in other dependencies of the *Departamento de Salubridad Pública*. Therefore, on March 23, 1922, the *Escuela de Salubridad* (today *Escuela de Salud Pública de México* [ESPM]) was founded, marking the beginning of the professionalization of public health education in the country.

For one hundred years the teachers of the ESPM have been in charge of directing and executing the sanitary works of the country; that is why its academic programs have varied according to the collective health problems of each period: smallpox, yellow fever, malaria, tuberculosis, sexually transmitted diseases, hookworm, leprosy, cancer, pinto disease, onchocerciasis, poliomyelitis, HIV/AIDS, cholera, dengue, chikungunya, cardiovascular disease, diabetes mellitus, diseases associated with nutrition, all the way to the Covid-19 pandemic, in the midst of which this institution celebrated its centennial.

The Children's Hygiene Service and the Industrial Hygiene and Social Welfare Service were created, and the ESPM established child nutrition and hygiene classes and industrial hygiene courses. Collective communal health services emerged in the 1930s; the IMSS was founded in 1943 and the ISSSTE in 1960, and the ESPM gave courses on the organization and administration of rural health centers and urban hospitals. During World War II, the ESPM decided to promote preventive measures to avoid pandemic diseases, and also to train spe-

cialists for the possible sanitary defense of the continent. In 1977, the World Health Assembly proposed the goal of "health for all by the year 2000", and the following year, the ESPM taught subjects related to the primary health care strategy designed to achieve this goal. It has also modified its curricula to respond to the needs of the National Family Planning Program and to problems related to reproductive health, accelerated population aging, environmental pollution, and violence.

Since 1922, and certainly to date, behind the ESPM there has been a network that has included the highest health authority (*Departamento de Salud Pública, Secretaría de Salubridad y Asistencia, Secretaría de Salud*), urban and rural health care centers, schools and universities, laboratories, research institutes and international organizations. At different times, the ESPM was responsible for the Schools of Child Care, Nursing and Public Health Nutrition. The *Instituto Nacional de Nutriología* –a state of the art research center in the field of nutrition– was part of the *Instituto de Salubridad y Enfermedades Tropicales*, back when the latter and the ESPM were a single institution.

Starting in the 1920s, the ESPM opened its doors to women for training (as bacteriology technicians, agents of the Communicable Diseases and Disinfection Services, social workers, and sanitary, visiting, and rural nurses). In 1948 it received the first woman in the master's degree in public health, and in the School's latest period, women doctors, masters and specialists have outnumbered men and have undoubtedly contributed to the democratization of public health services in Mexico.

Since the 1930s, students from Latin America and the Caribbean have been sent to the School for training

as public health specialists, and it is impossible to know with certainty the extent of the regional influence that the School has had on the continent's health policies. There are currently about thirty schools of public health, but the *Escuela de Salud Pública de México* (School of Public Health of Mexico) was the pioneer, and for decades, the main trainer of human resources for public health. As the country's general health education center, it has always been in line with the advances in world science;

it has been recognized nationally and internationally as a leading institution, and has managed to combine teaching, research, diffusion, and popularization in public health.

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