
FOREWORD

Centennial of the School of Public Health of Mexico. Leadership, tradition and competitive advantage

The School of Public Health of Mexico (ESPM, by its acronym in Spanish) became a centenarian in 2022. Over time, it has transmitted a set of values in the practice of public health education, and its name is associated with leadership, tradition, innovation and cutting-edge research, education and service. Over a century, the ESPM has been recognized as an exemplary institution, leader in public health education in Latin America and the world. In this special issue of the *Salud Pública de México* (SPM), which celebrates the first one hundred years of ESPM, we are grateful for the contributions of many academic leaders in public health globally and the diverse perspectives they have incorporated, whose emphasis is on the urgent need to keep transforming and advancing public health education.

In recent years, and particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic, a profound transformation has taken place globally in public health, making it an essential area in research and higher education. In the global context, the practice of public health has been strengthened at different health system levels; the practice of teaching, research and service in public health are currently perceived as a necessity making the practice of public health a scientific discipline capable of adequately solving population problems. Furthermore, it has acquired a remarkable significance in decision-making, and its importance is recognized in all segments of the community.

While the ESPM is celebrating its first 100 years, its educational model is currently undergoing a major

reform as an institutional priority. That is, public health education is today a primary public good and a *sine qua non* condition to contribute to eliminate health inequities. It is also a necessary element to promote universal coverage of health care services, with a community-oriented primary care perspective, and to improve the quality of life and sustain the dignity of populations globally. This special issue of the SPM aims to reaffirm, on a permanent basis, that health is a human right conceived as a public good; that, above all, it constitutes a resource that is not exclusive and should not compete with other social and economic priorities.

Public health education must actively contribute to the solution of health needs in a global environment where pandemics will continue to be a permanent threat, and where health in national and regional environments will be influenced by global health. Likewise, in its latest academic orientation, the new paradigms and conceptualization of public health, such as planetary health, should be included, as well as the need to innovate in new perspectives of epidemiological surveillance and intelligence to prepare for new pandemics.

This special issue of SPM ratifies that the central element of the mission of teaching and research in public health is the search for social equity. That is, the possibility of achieving a high standard of health that comes largely from social and economic justice. Population health is the product of a series of conditions that create opportunities for everyone to live a life unrestricted

by environmental and structural factors that upset the balance between the health-disease processes. Equity, to maintain health, must go hand in hand with justice, in the same way that universal health coverage and patient-centered quality care must be part of public policies that shape social welfare.

The National Institute of Public Health (INSP) and the ESPM implement the needed renovation that will optimize their institutional functions and make their academic practice more effective. This renovation consists of the organizational integration of research and teaching, at the service of health systems and social welfare, emphasizing its orientation towards community engagement, incorporating social and gender perspectives, and focusing on integral, multidisciplinary and holistic practices of public health. The Covid-19 pandemic taught us the need to reorient research and teaching in public health towards greater social welfare, which we must conceptualize with a new perspective, considering an intersectoral approach that connects the practice of public health not only to healthcare, but very importantly, to all the sectors related to the social determinants of health, including education, housing, urbanization, security and social justice, among others.

The INSP and the ESPM are institutions of high regional and global influence in the academic practice of public health; their research and teaching groups (GID, in Spanish), are becoming the key institutional element to link research and teaching in public health, and to implement mentoring and group tutoring for students and faculty. GIDs on chronic non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes mellitus,¹ food insecurity,² national health surveys,³ health service utilization,⁴ new tobacco products,⁵ malnutrition,⁶ infectious diseases,⁷ and many other topics attest to the enormous benefit that will accrue to the students who join INSP / ESPM's academic programs.

Over the past one hundred years, the ESPM has produced an enormous legacy in the training of nearly 18 000 graduates. Looking ahead to its second centennial, we project a brighter future, and the aca-

democratic restructuring that is taking place will allow it to strengthen its regional leadership.

Declaration of conflict of interests. Eduardo Lazcano was the director of ESPM during 2021 and the beginning of 2022 and is the current director-general of INSP. Laura Magaña Valladares was the Academic Dean of INSP during 2005-2017, and currently, President and CEO of the Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health (ASPPH).

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