

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

# Parallel stories: accreditation of Pediatric Emergencies in Latin America

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*Dear Editor:*

After reading with great pleasure the editorial, “The Specialty of Emergency Medicine, 50 Years Later,” which clearly outlines the evolution of both general and pediatric emergency medicine in Spain, I observed similarities in the development of pediatric emergency medicine in Latin America. Your review highlights the importance of this specialty—referred to as a “super-specialty” due to its complexity—in health systems. In many regions, particularly in middle- and low-income areas, pediatric emergency medicine often serves as the first and sometimes only point of access to healthcare, becoming the welcoming face of public health systems.

Super-specialized care, with dedicated areas and highly trained personnel, directly impacts the quality of care provided to patients. The March 2024 WHO report<sup>(1)</sup> indicates that in 2021, the infant mortality rate for children under five reached a historic low. This demonstrates that providing accessible, high-quality healthcare services with qualified personnel is an effective strategy that objectively improves child health outcomes.

Emergency medicine is an integral part of the pediatric curriculum and has developed alongside it<sup>(2)</sup>. In Latin America, the growth of pediatric emergency medicine varies across countries. However, there is a clear trend of increasing recognition and certification of the specialty in the region. According to a 2018 study by Kohn Loncarica et al.<sup>(3)</sup>, the specialty was first recognized and accredited in Mexico in 2006. Between 2010 and 2015, it gained recognition in Peru, Costa Rica, Uruguay, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and the

Dominican Republic. Gradually, the path to specialized care in emergency medicine is being established throughout Latin America.

Likewise, as you mention, scientific societies play a crucial role in promoting the growth of the specialty by defining international quality standards for its practice<sup>(4)</sup>.

In 2016, the Latin American Society of Pediatric Emergency Medicine (SLEPE) was founded in Uruguay. This scientific society aims to promote, disseminate, and advance the development of pediatric emergency medicine. Many countries are part of SLEPE, which contributes positively to this effort through courses, conferences, publications, and research.

Care in the emergency department is complex and is expected to become even more so. Specialists in this field must develop specific competencies to manage life-threatening injuries and diseases, particularly those prevalent in the pediatric population<sup>(5,6)</sup>, such as acute diarrheal illness, dehydration, respiratory diseases, shock, malnutrition, trauma, psychiatric disorders, and substance abuse, among others.

Similarly, the advancement of other specialties, such as neonatology, cardiology, and intensive care, has enabled more children with severe and complex conditions to survive, resulting in a growing population of complex chronic patients who will inevitably seek care in pediatric emergency services.

As pediatricians, we understand that health strategies focused on preventing childhood diseases—such as promoting safe delivery, nutrition, breastfeeding, vaccination, and access to clean water and sanitation—should be the cornerstone of child health. However, timely access to high-quality emergency care for critically ill children is equally essential to saving lives.

We have made significant progress in achieving recognition for the specialty of emergency medicine, but considerable challenges remain. These include ensuring that the specialty is accredited in all countries, addressing overcrowding in emergency services caused by limited access to

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healthcare, insufficient availability of hospital and intensive care unit beds, understaffing, and staff burnout<sup>(6,8)</sup>.

Our goal must be to provide optimal care for critically ill children, with highly trained personnel and dedicated emergency areas designed for that purpose<sup>(8-10)</sup>. This is the ultimate goal of emergency medicine. It is not a luxury... it is a necessity.

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### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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