Title: Experience of a Medical Intern in a Secondary Healthcare Hospital in Mexico

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Acknowledgment: I wish to thank María Jaqueline Muñiz Flores who has supported me in the process of writing and publishing all my research papers. I also thank the professionals at Pabellón de Arteaga General Hospital for giving me space and time to do research in my medical internship.

Financing: The Author have no funding or any other contribution to the study that was received from any source.

Conflict of interest statement by authors: The Author have no funding, financial relationships or conflicts of interest to disclose.

Compliance with ethical standards: Any aspect of the work covered in this manuscript has been conducted with the ethical approval of all relevant bodies and that such approvals are acknowledged within the manuscript.

Authors Contribution Statement:

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<td>Conceptualization</td>
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<td>Data Curation</td>
<td>Management activities to annotate (produce metadata), scrub data and maintain research data, including software code, where it is necessary for interpreting the data itself for initial use and later reuse.</td>
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<td>Software</td>
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<td>Writing – Original Draft Preparation</td>
<td>Creation and/or presentation of the published work, specifically writing the initial draft (including substantive translation).</td>
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Discussion Points:

1. What happens when you have to do this clinical year in a small hospital or secondary healthcare hospital?
2. Is medical education better in a tertiary healthcare hospital?
3. In a secondary healthcare hospital, do you only see common diseases?
4. Is research possible in a secondary healthcare hospital?
5. Is a rural hospital a bad place to learn?
ABSTRACT.

In Mexico, medical training is characterized by 4 or 5 years of studies at a university campus, one year of undergraduate internship and one year of social service. The undergraduate internship is the theoretical-practical academic cycle that takes place in the clinical fields and is part of the curriculum of the medical career. Normally we expect to be able to choose a hospital with subspecialties or with prestige in our region. But no matter the type of hospital, the important thing is our attitude to work and learn.

Key Words: Internship and Residency; Medical student; Personal Narrative [Publication Type]
THE EXPERIENCE.

In Mexico, medical training is characterized by 4 or 5 years of studies at a university campus, one year of undergraduate internship and one year of social service. The undergraduate internship is the theoretical-practical academic cycle that takes place in clinical fields and is part of the medical degree curriculum. The undergraduate medical intern or medical intern is a student enrolled in an institution of higher education, who meets the academic, administrative and legal requirements to perform the undergraduate internship.1

Medical interns are medical students who perform a rotating internship for one year after their university training. They are essential when attending patients in hospitals and clinics, thus avoiding the collapse of the national health system in Mexico. Everyone strives for the possibility of choosing a "good" site, however there are multiple external variables that influence the outcome, such as the number of students graduating per year, the number of universities, the number of hospitals available and the historical context being experienced (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic).

There is no consensus on the criteria for a good medical internship site, however, the current literature describes that most medical interns choose the sites closest to their home because the costs and transportation time increase with foreign sites.2-5 The reality is that we are pressured by teachers, doctors, peers or family members with the trite idea that a good internship site equals a better undergraduate internship. And by not getting any of those honorable or recognized institutions, there is a sense of defeat in those who have to choose sites far from home, less recognized institutions or with fewer patients.

What happens when you have to do this clinical year in a small hospital or secondary healthcare hospital? I chose the Hospital General de Pabellón de Arteaga, a second-level care hospital in Mexico. It only has emergency services, psychology, nutrition, epidemiology, internal medicine, general surgery, gynecology, pediatrics, radiology, traumatology, neonatal intensive care and reproductive health.6 The hospital has approximately 40 beds between all the services offered. We are 9 medical interns, with a schedule from 7:00 am to 3:00 pm, in which we have 2 months rotating cycle through the main services of the hospital. However, after 3:00 pm a team of 3 people is in charge of supporting the hospital during the afternoon and night shift. Every third day 3 people have a 32 hours shift. The team of interns is shown in Figure 1. Many of the medical interns in Mexico dream of seeing and participating in third level procedures, sub-specialist led surgeries or having different medical specialties in their hospital. In a secondary healthcare hospital, procedures are limited to the resources and specialties that are available on the unit.

In a secondary healthcare hospital, procedures are limited to the resources and specialties that are available on the unit. A small hospital or one with few subspecialties mean that it's a bad place for this important year in our training in Mexico. In the case of having few inpatients, we have the opportunity to deepen our knowledge and skills with feedback from the physician and resident physicians. On the contrary, in many small hospitals or in rural areas, the number of patients exceeds the hospitals’ capacity hence, allows the intern to find constant moments of learning and practice. In my hospital, the obstetrics and gynecology service has the highest number of patients seeking care for an obstetric event in the evenings. It is common to spend a full night in cesarean
sections, conducting labor and delivery. This shows that any hospital is a good place for undergraduate medical internships, regardless of the number of patients or type of specialties they have.

Is medical training in a tertiary hospital better? Overcoming the expectation of being in a larger hospital was difficult and a reality check that I needed. I found it a great opportunity for in-depth study of a smaller number of patients. It was important to have time to critically read scientific articles and the space for medical training with specialists and resident physicians.

Another virtue of being in a small hospital and perhaps peculiar in my case is the type of clinical rotation in the hospital services. In most hospitals in Mexico, intern teams rotate for 2 months in the main services offered by their hospital. During this time, they must concentrate on their service.

The case of my hospital is different; the number of interns per generation is 5 to 8 interns, who are divided into 3 teams (Figure 1). In the morning shifts from 7:00 am to 3:00 pm each one works in an assigned service for 2 months, but after that time a team of interns works in the evening and night shift for all the services of the hospital. This may seem like a lot of work, however there were good days and bad days. On good days our only job was to monitor admitted patients and support scheduled surgeries on the afternoon shift, but on bad days we had to support delivery care, cesarean sections, neonatal resuscitation, emergency department consultation, Foley catheter placement, wound suturing, etc. This was a great opportunity to practice different things over the course of a year.

In a secondary healthcare hospital, do you only see common diseases? The epidemiology of the reason for consultation and care is different by region and hospital. Being at a second level of care provides the tools to know what you can solve and what should be referred immediately. Despite that, there are many conditions with a rare incidence or as part of an incidental finding that can be found at this level of care. For example, Mondor’s syndrome, thanatophoric dysplasia, Loxosceles reclusa bite, granulomatosis with polyangiitis, cyclic vomiting syndrome and arthrogryposis multiplex congenita. The key to making these diagnoses with the limited resources available is the physical exam and health assessment that allow for timely referral to another level of care. In the absence of all the resources to confirm a diagnosis, referrals are usually made to other hospitals that have the corresponding services to confirm the diagnosis (e.g., the genetics service).

Is research possible in a secondary healthcare hospital? In my hospital, there is no fund that directly supports research led by an undergraduate internal medicine physician. But it does provide us with the following items:
1. Computer equipment with the software needed for research (Mendeley, R software, Epi Info™, etc).
2. A period of time in the hospital to do research.
3. Resident physicians or specialist physicians with the interest to support in research projects.

No matter where you are, research is always a possibility. So far, I found the opportunity to work on the report of two clinical cases and a narrative review, which are in the process of research. Regardless of the type of hospital you are in, I suggest 7 points:
1. Be a proactive person.
2. Study about your patients’ diagnosis and ask your doubts.
3. Research and publish your work.
4. Share the information you have with your colleagues and have a dialogue.
5. Learn and teach.
6. Use the technological tools at your fingertips, computer or smart phone.
7. Guarantee the best working conditions for your colleagues and for you, through a proactive and respectful dialogue with the corresponding authorities in your hospital.

In my perception, that if you have a good attitude to learn, are proactive and take advantage of all the opportunities that come your way, you can achieve great results regardless of the type of hospital in which you find yourself. The undergraduate medical internship, for all its structural flaws, provides a year of opportunity to complete 5 years of study. I hope my small experience can help you understand the benefits of this scenario. There are no small opportunities for big people, there are people who accomplish their goals with all the possibilities they find.
REFERENCES.


FIGURES AND TABLES.

Figure 1. Medical Interns and Resident Physicians of the General Hospital of Pabellón de Arteaga