

A unique opportunity for our Medical education: The Ottawa Conference in Barcelona 2004.

Who was to think that some edition of the Ottawa conferences would take place by the Mediterranean shores?. Probably nobody when at the very early stages, by the eighties, Professors Ian Hart and Ronald Harden were to lead one of the international meetings on Medical Education, that would end up being really prestigious conferences¹. In a non-stop manner the cities of Ottawa (in four occasions), Groningen, Toronto, Maastricht, Dundee, Philadelphia and Cape Town welcomed an increasing number of health sciences professionals interested in discussing this discipline own aspects.

The consolidation of the Ottawa conference, by the nineties, allowed to define a fixed outline based on: its biannual periodicity, alternating its site of celebration between North America and the rest of English speaking countries, the absolute responsibility of the local organizing committee, its contents variety within the general frame of education in health sciences and a friendly atmosphere in the forthcoming editions.

Our challenge, which began in 1999, to bring one of the Ottawa conferences to Barcelona, was based on the knowledge we had on the capacity of different institutions for education of our context and on related countries not traditionally involved in these events. This capacity was nourished by the increasing interest to improve the training of health professionals in a new social, demographic and global environment.

That is how the effort of an initially small group of professionals in our institutions, has succeeded in being able to celebrate the *11th International Ottawa Conference* in the city of Barcelona (4-8 July 2004), and has also managed to actively involve a number of colleagues and institutions.

Although we are responsible for making it a success, the

real point of this event is the opportunity it gives us to finally foster the education in health sciences in our country. In the last years we have managed to offer our citizens a health care likewise those of the most advanced countries and we have improved in research by reaching high levels; therefore we believe it is time to place health professionals education in its different levels (undergraduate, postgraduate, continuous professional development) at the same standard).

Some of the topics to be discussed at the Ottawa in Barcelona are emergent, and we believe they can be of interest not only for professionals involved in teaching but also for health professionals in general. The main topics will be: Evaluation and accreditation of health professionals, professional certification and recertification, improving undergraduate, postgraduate and continuous professional development, the European convergence of medical studies, professionalism and the institutions responsibility in keeping professional competence, the need of training in patient safety, or in new challenges faced by the professionals such as immigration and training for multiculturalism, training in bioethics or medical education research, just to mention some of the most relevant.

Since we heard our nomination to hold the Ottawa in Barcelona 4 years ago, we have kept reminding ourselves that some positive consequences must be left after the event in terms of improvement of our educational quality. For this purpose many things must concur, but the real important one which is in your hands, is your active participation in the conference either at the individual or institutional level. We look forward to meeting you in Barcelona.

*Ramon Pujol Farriols.
Josep M^a Martinez Carretero.*

1. Hart I, Harden R. The International Ottawa conferences on Medical Education. Med Teach 2000;22:331-333