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Academic Family Medicine in Brazil

GP-Miles: The Brazilian approach to make medical students enthusiastic for Family Medicine. And: continuity of a learning process – one answer for the medical educational complexity model.

The Brazilian scenario and SOBRAMFA

Family Medicine is not taught in Brazilian medical schools and Family Medicine faculty staff are absent in academic settings. If the academic knowledge of Primary Care is absent as a model in the undergraduate curriculum it will be difficult to promote family doctors among the students and to encourage them to choose family practice as their future career [1, 2].

Inspired by other countries' associations of Family Medicine teachers, SOBRAMFA – Sociedade Brasileira de Medicina de Família (Brazilian Society for Family Medicine: www.sobramfa.com.br) – was founded in 1992 as the first society in Brazil to establish the basis, and scientific methods, for Family Medicine. For more than seventeen years (1992–2009) SOBRAMFA has spread the Family Medicine philosophy among medical students at congresses, academic meetings, Family Medicine seminars, international meetings set in Brazil, and Continuous Medical Education courses [3–5].

The students' interest is a powerful resource to strengthen the core values of Family Medicine, as students realize that they need these values to become better doctors. In addition to seeing Family Medicine as their future specialty choice, Family Medicine provides students with the tools required to improve doctoring and for dealing with patients [6].

In Brazil, students who decided to take up Family Medicine have transformed themselves into real leaders and in some way made this goal a mission for their lives. It is difficult, because they face opposition in the medical school (and often even in their families) for choosing an unknown path, they need to be strong and well focused [7, 8].

The most important achievements from SOBRAMFA's academic branch (academic in Brazil means leading students and those involved in University teaching) has been to involve more than 3000 medical students in Family Medicine over the last 13 years, in several activities such as:

- the annual Family Medicine academic meeting (now up to the 13th).
- Family Medicine interested groups (up to 10 different medical schools).
- the Family Medicine day bringing students from several medical schools together to share educational experiences.
- the monthly meetings of the Family Medicine Committee in the APM (Associação Paulista de Medicina - São Paulo Medical Association), where an innovative learning model, student-teaching-student, led by the students, is set in the form of an ongoing medical education course. Using a medical case report, students discuss, in a medical education complexity model, the basis of Family Medicine.
- international participation in STFM [9] (this year is the 10th), Wonca Meetings and the Wonca Congress, where students presented their academic works.

One of the most effective family practice exposures for medical students occurs in the Mini-Fellowship in Family Medicine (MF2) program, which is an elective clerkship for medical students. Students



experience Family Medicine by seeing patients under the supervision of the SOBRAMFA faculty and residents, in a range of practice settings [10].

The Family Medicine Miles Program

To provide an official appraisal for all students involved in this related Family Medicine teaching scenario, SOBRAMFA run the Miles Program to measure the students' participation, rewarding them with grades, here called miles. The students get "miles" in Family Medicine through their involvement.

The Miles Program allows an individual assessment of each student, provides a balance between theory and practice, provides tutorial guides, and fosters leadership among the students. This "continuous medical education program" develops students' interest in Family Medicine, and encourages those who will be able to apply for the residency program developed by SOBRAMFA.

The Family Medicine Miles Program is managed by the SOBRAMFA web site, and students can find their own performance, as well as specific guides for improving their training (www.sobramfa.com.br/miles).

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