MEDICAL STUDENT TRAINING IN STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES FOR RESEARCH IN HEALTH SCIENCES

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The subject of Statistics Applied to Health Sciences is taught in the sixth year of the Medical Degree, so that students can learn about specific techniques that, soon afterwards, they will have to apply both to their own research and also to the findings of other investigators.

The teaching methods used include “critical reading of a scientific paper”. This serves as training and self-assessment of the knowledge they have acquired, in order to establish whether the experimental design followed, the statistical techniques used, and the conclusions drawn are correct or not, and whether the paper could be improved by other alternatives.

This critical reading is carried out at the end of the year, after the student has completed the contents of the course. An explanatory text has been drafted, with a series of references, to guide students through the paper that is given to them. Students are separated into groups of between ten and fifteen, and are given a paper that has been published in a medical journal, to read before meeting for a group session.

In the group meeting, supervised by a tutor, the members of the group discuss, among themselves, their suggestions and comments on the different parts of the paper concerned with the statistical methodology: selection of the sample, material and methods, display of the results, conclusions. They do not analyze either the introduction or the discussion, since to do this they would require specific knowledge about the subject matter of the article that the student does not usually have.

We have been following this procedure for several years and this course has been well received by the students, and highly esteemed afterwards by graduates who have completed it.