

Laboratory medicine in Latin America

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EDITORIAL

Latin America is a large region with a very diverse and complex laboratory environment. Resources are allocated very differently according to the health care system and interest of each government. Additionally, we must take into consideration that technology availability differs from country to country, and also from other parts of the world.

In general, there are three different levels of laboratory complexity going from small to mega laboratories. In addition, the laboratory is part of both, public and private sectors, the private part has a larger share though, where laboratory medicine is an essential part of patient care. In most of those laboratories, clinical chemistry, hematology, microbiology and urinalysis are the most common examinations done. However, university laboratories, research institutions and private organizations also contribute to the field, having highly specialized areas of research that fulfill the needs of the health care system.

With this issue, we are introducing the various aspects of laboratory medicine in Latin America. Articles are on a wide variety of topics including laboratory management, quality control, proficiency testing and accreditation. In this issue, Garzon's paper gives an

introduction of what is to be implemented in the quality management systems. Furthermore, Migliarino's paper describes the methodology to improve the precision and accuracy of tests, giving detailed information on some important requirements for the accreditation process. Acuña's experience, followed by Quintana's and Solis-Rouzant's paper is about implementing accreditation based on ISO 15189 in a general clinical laboratory and a university lab, confirming that, given institutional and professional cooperation, it is possible to do it in both settings. Regarding the very important emerging field of serological screening programs the article by Saez on infectious diseases in blood bank broadens the utility of laboratory medicine, and improves regional performance of these laboratory tests. Infectious diseases such as tuberculosis are a major worldwide health problem and

the paper by Teran and de Waard details the recent advances in the diagnosis of this disease from basic laboratory techniques to recent DNA technology that facilitates the identification of *M. tuberculosis*. Regarding the pediatric arena, Queiruga's description of the neonatal screening programs running in different countries, allows the audience to experience how this important field of laboratory medicine has been taken care of in Latin America from the 80's up till today. The opportunity to promote some aspects of laboratory medicine in Latin America through the eJIFCC is invaluable; having the opportunity to publish articles in both languages allows us to reach a substantial number of readers, furthermore, the eJIFCC is an important medium to disseminate our experiences to a global audience.