

Alzate – Seminario Internacional

THE STATE OF EPIDEMIOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Epidemiology as a scientific discipline has been theoretically and methodologically constructed during the last few decades, involving important advances concerning the understanding of concepts regarding health and disease involving differing fields of action such as research, training human talent, administering services and defining health policy.

Recently formulated currents of thought have highlighted different approaches to the topic, ranging from social epidemiology, eco-epidemiology to critical dialogue involving classical epidemiology. The international and national academic panorama involving discussion between emergent and classical currents of thought has led to the emergence of a movement within the discipline which has benefitted, enriched and led to questions being posed, mainly regarding the frontiers of its relationship with public health. Both fields of knowledge have shared an interest in addressing health from a collective perspective and have taken a path which has led to advances enabling populations to achieve a better quality of life.

The Universidad Nacional de Colombia's Inter-Faculty PhD Public Health programme is to present the 8th International Public Health Seminar entitled, "The state of epidemiological knowledge in the 21st century" (March 4th, 5th and 6th 2013), conscious of its role in promoting debate, constructing knowledge and the need to address current discussion.

The seminar is aimed at ensuring rich debate, including topic-based lectures and panels covering major theoretical contributions, methodological developments, applications and contrasts regarding epidemiological currents of thought, thereby contributing to public health at national and international level. Its objectives are:

- Promoting debate about theoretical and methodological approaches to epidemiology, as well as its scope and application in the field of public health;
- Contrasting contributions to public health made by different areas of epidemiological knowledge and discussing the trends and challenges arising from their application;
- Exchanging national and international experience concerning differing epidemiological currents of thought, allowing an in-depth approach to pertinent methodology and theoretical developments;
- Strengthening links between people, research groups and institutions interested in developing the relationship between epidemiology and public health; and
- Promoting research networking and academic strategic alliances and cooperation related to epidemiological knowledge in the 21st century.

The seminar is aimed at ensuring that epidemiology and public health are recognised as two complementary disciplines, involving their on-going conceptual, theoretical and methodological evolution becoming combined to provide an increasingly integral and reflective understanding of situations or phenomena related to populations, groups of people and communities' life-health-disease-death cycles.

Epidemiological knowledge induces an ongoing sense of inquiry aimed at producing and validating knowledge and existing and emergent learning which, it is expected, support the formulation of public policy, decision-making in the field of health and addressing new organizational and theoretical models concerning healthcare, as well

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as new technological sources of information and communications which are fundamental in resolving social, cultural, research, political and economic problems.

Classical, applied, clinical, social, eco, ethno, genetic, geographical and environmental types of epidemiology (to mention just some of them) form a body of knowledge which induces new forms of thinking and acting, teaching and researching; however, much in this field is yet to be known and many questions thus arise, for example:

- What is different and/or equal regarding such epidemiological knowledge?
- What approximates or distances such epidemiological knowledge?
- What use is such epidemiological knowledge (or has had) in training health-related or research-based human talent, and/or in resolving health-related problems, today and for the future?
- Which critical postures emerge regarding the above to ensure that theory becomes practice regarding health, public health and public policy?

The foregoing and many other epidemiological approaches and questions regarding different types and approaches in the 21st century form the order of the day in such academic space for establishing strategic alliances between academic institutions, healthcare service-providing institutions, healthcare professionals/staff and researchers. They also ensure that debate continues regarding the search for new explanations concerning public health, thereby orientating teaching, further-education, research, public policy and providing more just and equitable healthcare services regarding individual, group, populational and social matters.

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