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## BRIEF ORIGINAL

### The resident as teacher: Medical students' perception in a Spanish university<sup>☆</sup>



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#### Abstract

**Background and objectives:** Residents play an important but scanty assessed role in medical students teaching. The aim of this study was to assess the perception of medical students about residents' teaching activity.

**Materials and methods:** Autofilled survey provided to medical students of the University of Alcalá (Spain) in the final year in their school of medicine. Student opinion about care and teaching abilities of residents and physicians was evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale.

**Results:** 104 surveys were collected. A 69.9% of students consider that as much as 50% of their knowledge came from rounds with residents. Students believe that resident teaching lacks enough academical acknowledgment (94.2%); they estimate necessary to acquire teaching skills during residency (82.7%), and they would like to provide tutoring other medical students (88.5%). Students rated residents better than physicians on relational and motivational abilities.

**Conclusions:** There is a positive view about resident as a teacher among medical students, which suggests the need to improve the resident's teaching skills.

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**PALABRAS CLAVE**

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 Residencia e  
 Internado

## El residente como docente: percepción de estudiantes de medicina de una universidad española

**Resumen**

**Fundamento y objetivos:** El médico residente desempeña una labor importante, aunque escasamente evaluada, en la enseñanza del estudiante de medicina. El objetivo de este estudio fue conocer la opinión de los estudiantes sobre la actividad docente del residente.

**Material y método:** Encuesta autocumplimentada por estudiantes de medicina de la Universidad de Alcalá (España) durante el último año de su formación universitaria. Se evaluó la opinión de los estudiantes en relación con las habilidades docentes y asistenciales de los residentes y de los facultativos especialistas según una escala de Likert de 5 puntos.

**Resultados:** Se obtuvieron 104 encuestas. Un 69,9% de los alumnos percibían al residente como fuente de más de la mitad de lo aprendido durante sus prácticas. Los estudiantes piensan que la labor docente del residente no está suficientemente reconocida (94,2%), creen necesaria la adquisición de habilidades docentes durante la residencia (82,7%) y se muestran favorables a tutorizar a alumnos de cursos anteriores (88,5%). Además, puntúan mejor al residente en habilidades relacionales en comparación con los facultativos especialistas.

**Conclusiones:** Existe una percepción positiva del residente como docente entre los estudiantes de medicina, lo que sugiere la necesidad de mejorar las habilidades docentes del residente.

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**Background**

Resident medical interns (RMI) actively participate in the training of medical students, facilitating their approach to the medical profession, especially during the practical periods in the final years of their university education. The transfer of a number of clinical competencies from residents to students is improved by the intermediate position that the RMIs occupy, in terms of knowledge, authority and experience,<sup>1</sup> between the students and the area medical specialists (AMS). However, this transfer lacks academic recognition and, although it is assumed to be fruitful, it is not proportional to the teacher training level of the residents, who usually feel poorly prepared to teach.<sup>2</sup>

The influence the resident exerts on students and the students' positive assessment of the residents' educational work have been recognized for some time in published studies from outside Spain,<sup>3,4</sup> which have helped identify areas for improvement and design workshops that strengthen the teaching skills of RMIs. In Spain, there are currently no data on the students' opinions of residents as teachers, which hinders the development of specific activities to help RMIs learn to teach.

The aim of this study was to determine student opinion (during the last year of medical school) concerning the teaching activity of RMIs, as well as to analyze the assessment made by students on the various healthcare and teaching skills of both residents and physician staff in the setting of a Spanish university.

**Participants and methods**

The study enrolled students in the sixth year of medical school at the University of Alcalá belonging to the class of 2010/2011. To conduct the practical training in the final

years of the degree, the students are distributed to 3 associated hospitals. Two of these, the Hospital Principe de Asturias de Alcalá de Henares (HUPA) and the University Hospital of Guadalajara (HUG), are medium-sized general hospitals, with 594 and 432 beds, respectively. The other, Hospital Ramon y Cajal of Madrid (HURyC) with 1118 beds, is considered a large general hospital.

The students were invited to fill out a survey after performing the Structured Objective Clinical Assessment at the end of the academic year. The accompanying informed consent indicated that the survey would have no impact whatsoever on the student's test results.

The survey (Fig. 1) consisted of an initial assessment of the student's academic profile, followed by a block of questions concerning the teaching imparted by the resident, from which the main study measurements were obtained (student's perception of the degree of acquired practical knowledge attributable to RMIs and the time that they dedicate to teaching). The survey concluded with a section in which the student scored various teaching and healthcare skills applied to residents and physician specialists (secondary measurements), according to a Likert scale (1 = very poor; 2 = poor; 3 = regular; 4 = good and 5 = very good).

The design and drafting of questions were agreed upon by the research team after reviewing the literature published until April 2011 on the functions of RMIs as teachers. The resulting questionnaire was piloted in a session with 29 students from HUG to assess its execution time and the clarity of the questions.

The statistical analysis was performed using the SPSS 15.0 program (SPSS, Chicago, IL USA). We calculated Cronbach's alpha coefficient to assess the internal consistency of the test (its result is considered acceptable when greater than 0.8). The study was approved by the Ethics Committee for Clinical Research of HUG.

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