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Original article

Development of rheumatology training in Brazil:
the option for a medical residency program[☆]

Cleandro Pires Albuquerque*, Leopoldo Luiz dos Santos Neto

Universidade de Brasília (UnB), Brasília, DF, Brazil

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 18 November 2015

Accepted 9 March 2016

Available online xxx

Keywords:

Rheumatology

Medical residency

Specialization

Professional qualification

ABSTRACT

Objective: To describe the characteristics and progression of the supply of new rheumatologists in Brazil, from 2000 to 2015.

Methods: Consultations to databases and official documents of institutions related to training and certification of rheumatologists in Brazil took place. The data were compared, summarized and presented descriptively.

Results: From 2000 to 2015, Brazil qualified 1091 physicians as rheumatologists, of which 76.9% ($n = 839$) completed a medical residency program in rheumatology (MRPR); the others ($n = 252$) achieved this title without MRPR training. There was an expansion of MRPR positions. At the same time, there was a change in the profile of the newly qualified doctors. Early in the series, the fraction of new rheumatologists without MRPR, entering the market annually, was approaching 50%, dropping to about 15% in recent years. In 2015, Brazil offered 49 MRPR accredited programs, with 120 positions per year for access. There was an imbalance in the distribution of MRPR positions across the country, with a strong concentration in the southeast region, which in 2015 held 59.2% of the positions. Public institutions accounted for 94% ($n = 789$) of graduates in MRPR during the study period, while still maintaining 93.3% ($n = 112$) of seats for admission in 2015.

Conclusions: In the last sixteen years, in parallel with the expansion of places of access, MRPR has established itself as the preferred route for rheumatology training in Brazil, mainly supported by public funds. Regional inequalities in the provision of MRPR positions still persist, as challenges that must be faced.

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[☆] Study conducted in Hospital Universitário de Brasília, Universidade de Brasília (UnB), Brasília, DF, Brazil.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail: cleandropires@hotmail.com (C.P. Albuquerque).

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.rbre.2016.04.001>

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Evolução da formação de reumatologistas no Brasil: a opção pela residência médica

R E S U M O

Palavras-chave:

Reumatologia
Residência médica
Especialização
Formação profissional

Objetivo: Descrever as características e a evolução da oferta de novos reumatologistas no Brasil, de 2000 a 2015.

Métodos: Fizeram-se consultas a bases de dados e a documentos oficiais de instituições relacionadas à formação e à certificação de reumatologistas no país. Os dados foram cruzados, sumarizados e apresentados de forma descritiva.

Resultados: De 2000 até 2015, o Brasil habilitou 1.091 médicos à condição de reumatologistas, dentre os quais 76,9% (n=839) concluíram residência médica em reumatologia (RMR); os demais (n=252) obtiveram o título sem cursar RMR. Houve expansão das vagas de RMR. Paralelamente, ocorreu uma modificação no perfil dos recém-habilitados. No início da série, a fração de novos reumatologistas sem RMR, ingressantes no mercado anualmente, aproximava-se dos 50%, reduziu-se para cerca de 15%, em anos recentes. Em 2015, havia no país 49 programas de RMR credenciados, com 120 vagas anuais de acesso. Observou-se desequilíbrio na distribuição de vagas de RMR pelo país, com forte concentração na Região Sudeste, que em 2015 detinha 59,2% das vagas. Instituições públicas responderam por 94% (n=789) dos concluintes de RMR no período estudado, mantiveram ainda 93,3% (n=112) das vagas para ingresso em 2015.

Conclusões: Nos últimos 16 anos, paralelamente à expansão das vagas de acesso, a RMR consolidou-se como via preferencial para formação em reumatologia no Brasil, eminentemente suportada por recursos públicos. Desigualdades regionais na oferta de vagas de RMR persistem como desafios a serem enfrentados.

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Introduction

A medical residency is a form of postgraduate education *latu sensu* for physicians, in the form of specialization course, characterized by in-service training.¹ The first medical residency programs (MRP) in Brazil, known at the time as boarding programs, began in 1944 at the Hospital das Clínicas, the University of São Paulo.² In 1977, the Comissão Nacional de Residência Médica (National Commission on Medical Residency) (CNRM) was created; this institution exercises regulatory functions, monitoring and evaluation of MRPs, and its composition and competencies have recently been redefined by Decree No. 7562 of 2011.^{3,4} Since the 1940s, the number of MRPs and medical residency positions in the country grew progressively. However, there is little information available on the characteristics of that growth.⁵ With specific regard to medical residency programs in Rheumatology (MRPR) in Brazil, publications are scarce.⁶⁻⁸

A medical residency is a long-standing form for supervised insertion of physicians to professional life, and to qualify these individuals to the specialty.² The completion of MRP confers legally the Specialist Title (ST) in the area.¹ However, there is another way for the formal qualification of medical specialty in Brazil, based on an agreement between the Federal Council of Medicine (FCM), Brazilian Medical Association (BMA) and CNRM.⁹ This agreement provides for the granting of titles by MRPs accredited by CNRM, but also by medical specialty societies affiliated to BMA by weight of evidence.

The Brazilian Society for Rheumatology (SBR), affiliated to BMA, conducts an annual exam of sufficiency to obtain ST.

In 2015, physicians with MRPR certificate or with a specialization course in Rheumatology accredited by the Ministry of Education, with a minimum duration of 24 months were able to enroll in the examination, subject to the following prerequisite: the applicant should have completed his/her 24-month residency program or expertise course in internal medicine. Physicians without MRPR or a specialization course, but able to provide evidence of professional activity for more than four years, with regular participation in scientific events in the specialty and having accumulated at least 100 points in the BMA accreditation system, were also admitted.^{10,11}

At the time of this study, we could not find articles published specifically on rheumatologist training in this country, covering both accreditation ways to this specialty. However, such information is relevant to the proper formulation and evaluation of human resource training policies in Rheumatology, whether in government or academic sphere. This study aimed to describe the characteristics and development of new rheumatologists in Brazil, from 2000 to 2015.

Material and methods

This was an observational, retrospective, quantitative, descriptive study from time series. The period of interest in this research, defined by convenience, based on the availability of information, covered the period 2000–2015. Data were collected by searching computerized databases and official documents of Brazilian institutions related to training and certification of specialists in Rheumatology in this country.

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