

Health education in elementary school

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Opinion

Curriculum is a polysemic word, a word with several meanings, used in academic milieu to define the plan of the studies at a school or faculty. But to gain precision was restricted in the Workshop to the subject matter “Health Education in Elementary School” in the degree of the Faculty of Teacher Training. This subject basically includes cognitive, affective and action domains. The cognitive domain (knowledge and related intellectual abilities) involves, in short, understanding and realizing. The affective domain (interests, attitudes and values) is based on awareness, appreciation and consciousness. The action domain (application of knowledge and attitudes) is driven to developing by modifying and improving. Anyway for practical purposes, the Workshop focused the attention, on theoretical and practical contents, without going into other important aspects of the curriculum as human and material resources, and the schedule of activities.

Even this restrictive view the complexity of the subject makes impossible to be fully addressed in a Workshop so the first point to determine were the contents to be discussed. To make easier the objective we must remember that EAPE, in order to add years to life and life to years, has assumed the position that education in pediatrics for health promotion and fighting disease should be extended to all human life that is to the infancy, childhood, adolescence and adulthood. And therefore adolescent and adult diseases able to be prevented from infancy should be approached.

As the current major medical problems in developed societies are the so-called diseases of civilization, which are mainly adult diseases, largely preventable since childhood, this topic should be a part of the training curriculum of the child in school. In 1993 EAPE devoted to the subject its congress at Rome. In 2013 the EAPE Congress at Bordeaux addressed the role of school teacher in teaching the prevention of these diseases taking into account the experience of the Faculty of Teacher Training of the Valencia University preparing so the ground for the Budapest Congress.

This Congress started with the Opening Remarks addressed by Billeaud C. (President of EAPE), Gastaldelli A. (ECACN), Szamosi T. (President of the Congress, IGPAC) and Widhalm K. (AEROC). Immediately after the meeting came right to its main objective, the Education about Pediatrics at School and School Health Programs. In this line the first part of the session was devoted to the general aspects of the issue from several perspectives that included; The role of health school doctor and the pupils well being in secondary school by Lenoir, M., (F), National nutritional environment survey in schools- a tool for policy making by Martos E., Nagy B., Bakacs M. and Sarkadi Nagy E., (H), Promoting the health of children and adults by primary school teachers by Brines J., Martinez-Costa C. and Nunez F., (E), Health school organization and pediatrics for teachers in Europe by Billeaud C. (F) and Barak S., (Isr), A new e- learning program about breastfeeding, CME in pediatrics by Rigourd V., Roux C. and Billeaud C., (F).

The second part of the session was devoted specifically to the leading cause of death in developed countries, cardiovascular disease with the following communications: Defining cardiometabolic risk and its prevention by Gastaldelli A., (I), Practical prevention of cardiometabolic abnormalities. From the lesson of the Origin Study to the MD Pedigree project by Manco M., (I), Prevention of early CHD, the role of oxygen stress by Szamosi T., (H) and EDDY: A project for the prevention of obesity and CVD risk in schoolchildren aged 11-15 years by Helk O., Pöppelmayer C. and Widhalm K., (A).

The background provided by the experience of the Valencia University, the EAPE's Bordeaux Congress and these contributions gave to the members of the Congress the opportunity to discuss some aspects of the topic and to reach an agreement that could serve as a starting point for further improvements. The core subject “Children, Health and Nutrition” in the Degree of School Teacher Faculty of the Valencia University was assumed as a proper training program to offer future teachers a formal body of knowledge, practical skills and attitudes to promote the health of their future pupils and to project on their future as adults. It was worth remembering that this training program is developed on eight blocks of subjects:

1st Main aspects of the biological cycle of human being with his four classic stages: I. Initial, unicellular period (zygote), in which the genome is defined. II. Period of development, in which genetic information is materialized from environmental materials and in strict connection with them. This period includes two sub-periods, the intra-uterine and the extra-uterine one, with infancy, childhood and adolescence stages. III. Period of adulthood, or biological fullness and capabilities psychological and social. IV. Period of decline or old age, that ends with death.

This general framework on the whole human life offers to future teachers a basic knowledge of biology, psychology and sociology of healthy and sick child in order to acquire knowledge, practical skills and attitudes to enable them to promote healthy lifestyles that serve children in the present and when they reach maturity.

2nd. Nutrition and its importance to the health of children and their influence on the adult.
3rd. Physical exercise and sport.
4th. Basic information on the major diseases of children especially those affecting the school.
5th. Main diseases of adults.
6th. Accidents and poisoning.
7th. Preventing toxic habits (smoking, alcohol and illegal drugs).
8th. First aid and basic guidelines for cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

Psycho-affective and social aspects of the children that may affect their development were put in relief by some delegates and incorporated into the fourth block of the training program.

There was a whole agreement that the next step in this line would be to achieve a general consensus among EAPE, school teacher societies and relative institutions to complete the contents of the training programs for health to the primary school teachers. At this point it was stressed the importance of respecting local peculiarities

as they can modify needs, resources and priorities, and to ascribe to the program about 10-15 % of the whole curriculum time. A further target after define teaching contents will be the distribution of the corresponding tasks and activities according to the child's age and grade.

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Conflict of interest

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