



XI Congress of Latin American Social Medicine & Collective Health

The Latin American Medical Association (ALAMES) will be hosting the 11th Congress of Latin American Social Medicine and Collective Health from November 17-21 in Bogota Colombia. This meeting will coincide with the 25th Anniversary of the founding of ALAMES and its theme is the role of health in the Latin American political and social agenda. Below we present an abridged version of the planning document for the conference. The complete version is available in Spanish in Medicina Social. More information can also be found on the ALAMES website (www.alames.org)

- The Editors

The 11th Latin American Congress of Social Medicine and Collective Health is both a convocation and a celebration. It's a convocation to create bold and innovative alternatives to the profound crisis of neoliberal globalization, a crisis that is only just beginning. The response to this crisis cannot just be limited to socializing the speculators' losses. Now is the moment for proposing and bringing about a true change in global direction..

The Congress also celebrates the 25th anniversary of Association of Latin American Social Medicine. Under the leadership of the Argentinean physician and sociologist Juan Caesar Garcia, Latin American Social Medicine gained recognition in the 1960's for generating its own unique, critical, and activist health alternative. In 1970's the Collective Health movement was formed in Brazil. Collective Health was created within the framework of a public health movement that participated decisively in the democratization of that country and then later in the creation of its unified national health care system. In 1984 ALAMES was created. This collective effort has permitted the production, archiving, promotion and diffusion of a school of political thought and social action which are now central to regional debates on health. A solid and comprehensive evaluation of 25 years of successes and failures will contribute to formulating a strategic vi-

sion that can respond to the contemporary historical challenge.

Given these two purposes, the 11th Congress will serve more as a forum for debate than as a traditional academic congress. To facilitate this debate, we have established a preparatory process and three axes of reflection.

The first axis consists of deepening our analysis of the current state of Latin American health and quality of life as well as the status of the guarantee to the right to the health, placing spe-



cial emphasis on the impact of neoliberalism. We hope to advance understanding of the social determination of the health and the production and reproduction of health inequities. We are particularly interested in the impacts of the deregulation of the work market, systematic privatization, the Free Trade Agreement, social and environmental deterioration, climate change, and increasing individualism.

The second axis focuses on the political and technical tendencies that have guided the recent development of health policies and health systems in Latin America. Our goal is to compare and contrast words and deeds with respect to the right to health and health equity. This requires an examination of the ethical and organizational bases of current health debates: Should health programs be universal or selective? Comprehensive or targeted? Inclusive and equitable or exclusive and inequitable? Primarily public or primarily private? Single national systems or ones based on individual insurance? Organized around the offer or the demand for services? Structured around institutional or popular participation? This axis will examine social medicine and collective health's experience in building health care policies and systems that are designed to support health equity and health as a social right. These experiences vary from the local and municipal, up to the state and national levels.

The 11th Latin American Congress of Social Medicine and Collective Health should repre-

sent a decisive step forward in this time of deepening crisis for a neoliberal model that had thought itself invincible. The present moment offers both challenge and opportunity. The complexity of the situation demands proposals that are bold and complex, able to solve immediate demands as well to advance strategically in the transformation of social structures and the creation of new forms of thought and action. It is a moment of opportunity because the current crisis will only be resolved through innovation and a radical change of course. In the words of Bertolt Brecht "to criticize a river is to build a bridge."

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