

The Child and Adolescent Health Observatory: a new challenge

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Observing implies “looking at something or someone very carefully and closely to acquire knowledge about their behavior or characteristics.” Moreover, why focus on childhood and adolescence? Because they are the most vulnerable ages of life. The probability of a child dying or seeing their quality of life diminished increases significantly when their socioeconomic and environmental surroundings do not cover basic needs, care, and adequate health care or when there are failures in the quality of services provided. This is evidenced in the latest figures for reducible causes of mortality, which still exceed 60% in our country.

According to sources from the Secretariat of University Extension of the Law School of the University of Buenos Aires, the observatories contribute to improving healthcare policies and services. These spaces not only favor the creation and formation of consensus but also generate proposals aimed at strengthening and improving the functioning of the country’s health system. Their essential purpose is to defend the right to health, ensuring effective access by the most vulnerable sectors.

The Sociedad Argentina de Pediatría (SAP, by its Spanish acronym), within the framework of joint agreements with UNICEF, has a long history in this field. For over a decade, it has published the bulletin *Salud Materno Infanto Juvenil en Cifras*, an initiative of Dr. María Luisa Ageitos, distributed

throughout the country since 1991. This material has been used to discuss local realities at a national level in various SAP activities, such as workshops, conferences, and congresses. In 2009, the “Talleres de Salud maternoinfantil más allá de las cifras” (Workshops on maternal and infant health beyond the numbers) were created to increase awareness and analyze the situation of maternal and infant mortality in the different regions of the country.

In 2013 and until 2015, the basis for developing an observatory was established within the framework of an SAP-UNICEF agreement. This Observatory, through the analysis of official data, reflects the state of childhood and adolescence in Argentina, considering demographic, social, environmental, sanitary, educational, and human resources indicators in the health field. This idea was fully realized only during Dr. Omar Tabacco’s term as president of the SAP, with the support of subsequent Steering Committees. Thus, a tool was created to help detect the needs of our children and adolescents, promote health promotion efforts, and evaluate progress in providing immunization, health, water, and sanitation services.

Why is it essential to have a Child and Adolescent Observatory? The motto of the SAP, “For a healthy child and adolescent in a better world,” shows the integrative view of pediatrics and its commitment to a historical

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and social reality that entrusts its future to it. This commitment of the Sociedad Argentina de Pediatría to the children and adolescents of our country and public health is essential to guarantee healthy and equitable development for future generations. The challenge is to generate information that provides pediatricians with valuable tools for health care, to understand how social determinants impact health outcomes, and to place events of importance for the health of children and adolescents on the public agenda.

The Observatory generates information through official data sources from different governmental agencies in our country. It operates in three dimensions: 1) socioeconomic and environmental determinants, 2) education, and 3) health. It analyzes inequalities according to infant mortality and economic and structural poverty indicators by jurisdictions of the country and in different age groups. It permanently updates these indicators in the SAP portal. It prepares special reports on topics the Society prioritizes, such as vaccination coverage, the situation of adolescents, nutrition and breastfeeding, and the respective committees and sub-commissions. In addition, according to the problems identified and prioritized by the SAP in each report, specific surveys are generated in collaboration between the Observatory and the committees and subcommittees involved. Subsequently, they are managed jointly, and each subsidiary

takes advantage of appropriate data capture tools (RedCap). The results obtained from the active participation of pediatricians from all over the country are shared with the different affiliates in workshops and regional conferences. These activities serve as a starting point for joint work with the governmental authorities of each jurisdiction, providing helpful information for health decision-making in every corner of our country.

The *State of the World's Children* is a report published by UNICEF that examines the most pressing issues affecting children yearly through data and statistics. Each edition of this report takes an in-depth look at a child issue of global scope, highlighting the importance of statistical data in supporting actions in favor of children and exposing inequity in access to services and protection systems.

The analysis of the situation of children and adolescents in Argentina must focus sharply on fulfilling the rights outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the commitments assumed by the country at the international level, and the fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals.

However, what is most valuable is our commitment as pediatricians, the best interlocutors for children and their families.

What if we all had the same opportunities? Our horizons –the most important thing– let no one be left behind! ■