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EDITORIAL

Provincial Medical Science Information Centers: the network that supports teaching and science

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Dear readers:

In January 1960, before the members of the Academy of Sciences, Fidel stated that the future of the country had to be "a future of men of science."(1) He spoke of opportunities for intelligence, and for these opportunities to be of any use, knowledge needed to circulate. Five years later, on April 26, 1965, the National Information Center for Medical Sciences (NICMS) was founded. That is the institutional origin of what we today call the health information system, and its meaning was what marked the policy of the Revolution: that scientific information reach everyone who cares, teaches, or researches, and not just those who live near a good library.

The network was put together piece by piece. In 1966 the libraries of the first hospitals were organized. In 1969, the first Provincial Information Center for Medical Sciences (PICMS) opened, the one in the former province of Las Villas. The one in Pinar del Río was created on May 2, 1970.(2,3) The others arrived during the following fifteen years.

Since then, the provincial center methodologically directs the hospital and polyclinic libraries, contributes to training those who serve them, and links the province with the national system. The crisis of the 1990s could have left him without resources to sustain that work. What happened was something else: in 1992 Infomed was born, with a decentralized logic, with nodes in all provinces and content produced in each territory.(4) We went from waiting for information to producing it and indexing it ourselves. In Pinar del Río, today that means a network of 26 medical libraries in 11 municipalities, two indexed scientific journals, the provincial Infomed node and the university's institutional sites.

The decentralization of medical teaching, which brings training to polyclinics and municipalities, has given the Center a role that it did not previously have with this intensity. A student or a professor in a remote polyclinic needs the same bibliography, the same guidance to search for it and the same guarantees of access

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as someone who is at the central headquarters. If that fails, the quality of the training process in that scenario fails, and no indication corrects it later.For this reason, the substantive processes of the university (undergraduate and postgraduate training, research, teaching categorization, doctoral training, publication of results, extension work) largely depend on the Center and its network functioning. There are real limits, from connectivity to a sometimes sparse workforce. Even so, the network continues to serve those who need it, and some users still come in search of information in hard format, which our libraries also preserve and manage.

Within this decentralization there is an area that almost never appears in the reports and on which a good part of postgraduate improvement depends: videoconferencing, linked to the management of scientific degrees. Doctoral training and master's degrees are no longer done only at headquarters. The meetings between tutor and applicant, the pre-defenses, the defenses, the courses and the workshops bring together teachers and students spread across the municipalities, or even from other provinces or nations. For this work to occur with quality, someone has to guarantee the technical scenario and the connection, and someone has to support the applicant with bibliography, with advice to publish and with the record of their scientific production. At our university that someone is the Provincial Medical Sciences Information Center. That's why I see it as the point where doctoral training, master's degrees and the rest of the substantive processes intersect.

There is a rarely mentioned part of this work that deserves its place: the science that students do. What is presented at student scientific conferences, what the scientific groups of the FEU and the faculties produce, the undergraduate research, usually ends up in a summary of the event that no one reopens. The student magazine changes that destiny. The student who goes through the revision, style correction and normalization of his references learns how to publish, and his result is visible, with author and date, for anyone who looks for it. In a career that is increasingly taught in municipalities and polyclinics, this visibility also has another effect: it shows that research is not a privilege of the central headquarters or the provincial units.

Official websites fulfill a function that should be stated in every letter. ucm.pri.sld.cu, of the University of Medical Sciences of Pinar del Río, and pri.sld.cu, the provincial Infomed, are the two institutional sites of the territory, and both are hosted on sld.cu, the national Infomed portal. There a professor, a resident or a manager should be able to find institutional information, calls, magazines and services, with the guarantee that it is the current and officially endorsed version. Compared to what circulates without a clear origin through other means, that identified source weighs. Furthermore, what is not published and recorded on those sites and in the system's databases is, for all practical purposes, a result that no one else can use.

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The two magazines of the center were born and have grown alongside that system. The results of a research, or a thesis, of a service or a rural polyclinic reach other teachers because someone processed them, indexed them and made them available. Recognizing those who made it possible, and those who support it today, with few resources, is the least we can do from these pages.

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