

CEU - UNCOL (Colombia) expands health technology assessment activities

The Clinical Epidemiology Unit of the Universidad Nacional de Colombia (CEU-UNCOL) is a second-generation CEU created in 1996 under the support of the Ministry of Health of Colombia, INCLEN and the Universidad Nacional de Colombia. It is located at the Instituto Materno Infantil in Bogota, a referral centre of maternal and peri-natal care where undergraduate and postgraduate students of UNCOL Medical School are trained.

The CEU staff is composed of eight members representing the disciplines of clinical epidemiology, social sciences, clinical pharmacy and statistics. Since its establishment, the staff members have been actively participating in the research activities within and outside the university. As a CEU, it has participated in the recruitment and follow-up phases of the Magpie Study, a study carried out to evaluate the use of magnesium sulphate in the prevention of eclampsia and its consequences to the newborn. It has also worked on policy projects directed to improve the control of infections and chronic diseases in Bogota.

Currently, the CEU projects are in line with the evaluation of technologies and policies in health and measurement, such as: "Reducing maternal morbidity and mortality by means of quality improvement methods at the Instituto Materno Infantil"; the "Efficacy of para-cervical block in the management of pain in women with incomplete abortion treated with manual vacuum aspiration"; the "Cost-effectiveness of laparoscopy in the diagnosis of non-specific lower abdominal pain"; and the "Evaluation of acute respiratory infections and acute diarrheal diseases programs for children in Bogota, Colombia".

Among the Unit's recent publications are: "Reducing infections among women undergoing Cesarean section in Colombia by means of continuous quality improvement methods" published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* in 2001; and "Laparoscopic diagnosis of acute lower abdominal pain in women of reproductive age" published in the *International Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* in 2002. See Announcements on page 23 for details. Another study by Dr. Hernando Duarte Gaitan and colleagues entitled "Validity of five diagnostic methods in mild to moderate pelvic inflammatory disease" has been submitted for publication in the *Journal of Infectious Diseases in Obstetrics and Gynecology*.

The Unit has also published a book in Spanish entitled "Strategies of Clinical Research" edited by Enrique Ardila, Ricardo Sanchez, and Jairo Echverry.

Aside from research, CEU-UNCOL is also busy developing its Master in Clinical Epidemiology Program, scheduled to open in 2004.

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