

Notes on the institutionalization of Medicine in Michoacán, 19th century

Apuntes sobre la institucionalización de la Medicina en Michoacán, siglo XIX

Óscar A. Sánchez-Pérez and Alain R. Rodríguez-Orozco*

Faculty of Medical and Biological Sciences "Dr. Ignacio Chávez", Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, Morelia, Michoacán, Mexico

Abstract

The objective of the study was to show identity traits of the process of institutionalization of Medicine in the 19th century in Michoacán. Relevant aspects of the creation and evolution of the institutions related to the health care of Michoacans during the 19th century are pointed out from the review of hemerographic material and texts referring to the practice of medicine in that century, in the State from Michoacan.

Keywords: Health institutions. Michoacán. 19th century. History of medicine.

Resumen

El objetivo del estudio fue mostrar rasgos identitarios del proceso de institucionalización de la Medicina en el siglo XIX en Michoacán. Se señalan aspectos relevantes de la creación y la evolución de las instituciones relacionadas con el cuidado de la salud de los michoacanos durante el siglo XIX a partir de la revisión de material hemerográfico y textos referentes a la práctica de la Medicina en esa centuria, en el Estado de Michoacán.

Palabras clave: Instituciones sanitarias. Michoacán. Siglo XIX. Historia de la medicina.

Introduction

The process of Medicine institutionalization in Michoacán during the 19th century is quite interesting, since through its study we can understand the historical importance of the sanitary discourse in the organization of public health in the state. It is important to mention that the history of the bodies responsible for monitoring the practice of medicine, its teaching and, in those days, public health in Morelia, was similar to that of the highest health authority in Mexico City. This

article had the purpose to show identity traits of the process of Medicine institutionalization in the 19th century in Michoacán, which is useful for the immediate background of the health institutions that today operate in the State to be understood.

Creation of institutions for the care of Michoacán's population health in the 19th century

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, municipalities had to have a commission especially

*Correspondence:

Alain R. Rodríguez-Orozco

E-mail: alain.rodriguez@umich.mx

2444-0507/© 2020 Academia Mexicana de Cirugía. Published by Permanyer. This is an open access article under the terms of the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Date of reception: 02-09-2020

Date of acceptance: 25-10-2020

DOI: 10.24875/CIRUE.M23000344

Cir Cir (Eng). 2021;89(3):409-414

Contents available at PubMed

www.cirugiaycirujanos.com

responsible for providing for public health of the place, which should always have the support of a parish priest and one or more doctors where available, in order to illustrate it on its deliberations. However, public health status continued to deteriorate, since although the commissions existed in most municipalities of the State of Michoacán, they tended to act only in times of epidemic¹.

The *Protomedicato* in Michoacán was created in 1829 by doctors Juan Manuel González Urueña and Juan Francisco Macouzet, and surgeon Francisco Córdova, as an attempt to have in Michoacán an institution that had jurisdiction throughout the State. Its main functions were focused on the control of medical practice and the promotion of health actions in case of epidemics. Its most important attribution was the task of examining those who attempted to practice health-related activities, such as medicine, surgery, pharmacy, and phlebotomy¹.

The *Protomedicato* members examined the social problem of health and concluded that one of the main causes of deficient care was the lack of people trained to practice medicine in the State. As a solution, they proposed the establishment of a Chair of Medicine and the development of regulations for its erection and operation². On November 9, 1829, the establishment of the chair was decreed, which would be provided sufficient economic resources for the payment of a professor, the necessary instruments and the expenses that would arise for its maintenance. It was also determined that the *Protomedicato* would be in charge of regulating and ensuring the proper functioning of the Medicine Chair³.

By November 21 of that year, the following points were established: "1) The Chair of Medicine will be under immediate protection of the State government; 2) The Chair will include in its courses the study of Descriptive Anatomy, Physiology, General Pathology and Public and Private Hygiene; 3) The courses, which will be three, are to be started on January 15 and to end on the last day of November; 4) There will be teaching activities every day, except only on Sundays and religious or political holidays; 5) There will be two hours of lecture in the morning and from seven to nine and one in the afternoon when the professor considers it convenient; 6) The first and second courses will be assigned to the teaching of Anatomy and Physiology, in the third course, Pathology and Hygiene will be taught; 7) the Authors to be studied shall be approved by the *Protomedicato*"³.

The Medicine Chair was not opened on the date that had been established, but on May 1, 1830. On March 3, 1834, the *Protomedicato* was transformed into the Medical Faculty of Michoacán. In the decree whereby the Faculty was established, the merge of "medical and surgical sciences" was also established, and the learning of both disciplines was directed by the Medical Faculty. Unlike the previous body, at that time it would be made up of two physician and surgeon professors, a pharmacist, a prosecutor, and a secretary. The tasks that were in charge of the Medical Faculty were to examine those who wanted to practice medicine and to ensure that they exercised the profession correctly, to ensure that those who practiced medicine without a professional title were sanctioned, to develop pharmacopoeias, surveillance of apothecaries and of the quality of food and beverages, and to ensure that the streets, squares, cemeteries, hospitals and orphanages were cleansed¹.

Another of the tasks entrusted to the Medical Faculty of Michoacán was the creation of a code of sanitary laws and regulations for the State¹. The North American and French interventions further hampered the possibility for the Medical Faculty and any educational institution to be able to perform the tasks they had been created for⁴.

During the second empire, there were efforts to improve public health. A Central Public Health Council was organized, which was published in the Law on the General Police of the Empire in 1865, and other aspects were also taken into account, such as the Subaltern and Health Service Boards¹. After the victory of the Republican government, the Medical Faculty was suppressed to establish the Board of Public Health of Michoacán in its place on January 3, 1869, which was renewable every year. It was composed of five members and had the tasks of supervising the practice of medicine, "performing examinations, visiting apothecaries, taking care of hygiene and public health, creating a Pharmacopoeia and collecting, in the form of a Code, the laws of medical and sanitary police, and assisting justice with its investigations"⁵. The Board was composed of two types of commissions: the permanent commissions, which had functions established according to the purposes they had been created for, such as the commissions of legal medicine, pathological statistics and public hygiene, and the "accidental" commissions, which were created according to the circumstances¹.

In 1894, the Public Health Board was replaced by the Superior Public Health Council, established by law

on June 12, 1894. This health reorganization in Morelia was explained by the government as follows⁶:

“But in order to preserve public health, it is necessary to attend, with commitment and efficiency, to each one of the elements that make it up, and since these are multiple and for the most part difficult to fix, and because of the facultative knowledge they entail, and because of the interests and rights that come into play in the combination of such elements, it is essential to make of public health a special administrative branch, entrusted to a consulting body that has the elements of science and authority that may be necessary for a harmonious arrangement of all details”.

The new body in charge of public health did not appear to have too noticeable changes with regard to its predecessor and did not represent a radical change for public health improvement, since the substantial change that existed between the Public Health Board and the Council was that the members of that Board performed their duties free of charge while those of the Council would receive the remuneration that the State would assign to them according to the expenditure budget. The change appeared not to be too important, but the intervention of the State had the improvement of public service as its main goal, because no matter how big the commitment of the Board members to comply with the duties of their positions was, they would have never paid enough attention because these positions did not have an economic remuneration, and the greatest attention of its members was therefore in those tasks that allowed them to obtain a secure income⁶. And so, with one of the most motivating elements for performing an assigned task, a good salary, is that improving the performance of the members of the Superior Public Health Council was intended, on whom everything related to hygiene and public health would fall, as well as the study of the causes of the dominant, epidemic and epizootic diseases in order for then to propose appropriate measures, monitor the quality of beverages and groceries, clean the settlements and issue the regulations that might be required for improving public health⁶.

One of the most important tasks that would be commissioned to the Superior Public Health Council, would be the creation of a health code for the State of Michoacán de Ocampo. The draft code, as well as the regulations under which the Council would be governed, were issued one year after its establishment. The first part of the regulation, published on 5 January 1896, mentions the following⁷:

Art. 1. As of January 1, 1896, the Superior Public Health Council will be composed of five proprietary members and four substitutes. Both among the proprietary and among the substitute members, there will be a Pharmacy Professor, with the remaining being Medicine Professors. There will also be a health inspector, whose functions will be determined by the respective regulations.

Art. 2. The President and board members of the Council shall be appointed by the Government and shall remain in office for two years from January 1st of the year they begin to function.

Art. 3. The President of the Council shall attend the office every day at the time designated by the Regulations, to dispatch those matters pending agreement.

Art. 4. The members of the Council, except for the Pharmacy Professor, will be in charge of medical care at the public establishments assigned to each one by the Executive.

Art. 5. Ordinary visits shall be carried out at least twice a week on the days and hours designated by the Government, notwithstanding that physicians attend on any other day and immediately at the time they are called to present their aid to sick individuals who require it.

Art 6. Should an epidemic threaten or start in the establishments in question, or in any other case in which for reasons of hygiene the doctors deem it necessary, the Council shall be notified immediately in order for this Body to determine or promote whatever might be convenient to avoid or combat the disease.

Art. 7. On the last day of each month, the directors or managers of the establishments and the District Prefect, as far as public security forces are concerned, shall inform the Government in writing on the results of the visits carried out and on the state of health the persons under their surveillance are in.

Art. 8. The same report will be given by the doctors to the Council, so that, based on it, this Body dictates the determinations it deems necessary for the improvement of health on the visited places.

Art. 9. The salaries the members and employees of the Council are entitled to, will be those determined by the budget and, in the second semester of this fiscal year, will receive those that the Executive has indicated in the agreement of the same date.

In a second part, the specific attributions the Superior Public Health Council must comply with are mentioned⁸:

- Initiate, before the Government, as soon as possible, a Sanitary Code and the regulations that from it shall emanate.
- Monitor for strict compliance with the provisions of the Code and the regulations referred to in previous paragraph, reporting to the Government of the infractions that are noticed, in order for it to apply the corresponding remedy.
- To perform, in the terms provided for in the Sanitary Code, the visits that would be necessary to dangerous, uncomfortable and unhealthy rooms, establishments and buildings; to apothecaries, beverage and grocery stores; to markets, theaters, workshops, factories, diners, schools, colleges, barracks, prisons, orphanages, hospitals, brothels, corner stores, stables, pigsties, cemeteries, and in general to everything that has dangerous agglomerations of people or animals, or that may constitute an threat to health.
- To obtain from those it deems appropriate the news that are needed for knowing the public health status of the State.
- To organize the health service in the terms provided for by the referred code.
- To resolve the queries made by the State authorities on matters concerning its activities. Said consultations shall be made via the Government, if they originate from administrative authorities, and via the Supreme Court of Justice if they originate from the judiciary.
- To duly inform to the Executive, for the consequent effects, the food substances, beverages or drugs whose introduction into the State may be harmful to public health.
- In addition, to indicate when an epidemic or epizootic threatens to spread to Michoacán in order for appropriate measures to be dictated for it to be prevented.
- To develop and publish, at the end of each year, the Medical Statistics of the Capital, with a report of the prevailing, endemic and epizootic diseases that have appeared, stating the causes and data that can illustrate it; as well as a summary of the news received from other settlements of the State.
- To inform the Government of the reasons for insalubrity found in the rooms, establishments and others referred to in the 3rd section of this article,

as well as of those that are noticed in the garbage dumps, ditches, canals, sewers and pipes in order for the necessary measures to be dictated, which are to be issued by the Council itself.

- To take care of the strict fulfillment of the laws and provisions related to vaccination, reporting to the Government the infractions that are noticed in order for it to apply the corresponding remedy.
- To keep, inasmuch as possible, the other known preventive vaccines and those that are known to have been found, and those that are found to be efficacious for preventing the development of diseases.
- To get, inasmuch as possible, in touch with the Public Health Boards of the country and with other similar Corporations abroad.

A division in commissions was proposed, which would have different tasks to facilitate the observation of public hygiene, such as the commission for observation and regulation of health personnel, the commission of health on the Districts, of food and beverages, of Pharmacy, drugstores, apothecaries and other establishments, of epidemiology and epizootics, among others, which would add-up to twenty-two commissions⁹. The Superior Public Health Council would head towards sanitary “modernization”, and as a proof of this, the first Sanitary Code of Michoacán would be issued, which was to come into force on January 1, 1896.

There were several outstanding personalities linked to Medicine in Michoacán in the 19th century, but none with so much brilliance as Dr. José Manuel González Urueña, illustrious man of sciences and humanities, born in Tancítaro, Michoacán, in 1798, and who, among his many achievements, was founder of the Medical School of Michoacán, outstanding defender of the *Colegio de San Nicolás*, First President of the *Protomedicato* of Michoacán, President of the Medical Faculty, magnificent writer and translator, and doctor of enormous scientific and human quality in his time; and in politics, he was a local and federal deputy, senator, government adviser and governor. The father of the Medical School of Michoacán died in Celaya, Guanajuato, in 1854, after an undeserved forced exile by the regime of López de Santa Anna¹⁰.

In addition to the San Juan de Dios Hospital in Morelia, which later would be transformed into a Public Hospital, in the State of Michoacán, the following

Table 1. Chronology. Relevant aspects of the creation and evolution of institutions related to Medicine in Michoacán, in the 19th century

1826	Creation of the Medical Surgical Board of Michoacán
1829	The Michoacán <i>Protomedicato</i> replaces the Board
1830	Foundation of the Chair of Medicine at San Juan de Dios Hospital with members of the <i>Protomedicato</i> as teachers and Juan Manuel González Ureña as president
1833	Reform of the curriculum. The Medicine and Surgery courses are merged in a single institution, the Surgical Medical Institute/Establishment
1834	The <i>Protomedicato</i> is transformed into the Medical Faculty of Michoacán
1847	<i>Colegio de San Nicolás</i> is reopened and remains as the headquarters for Medicine courses in the State
1848	Courses for midwives are enabled under the leadership of Dr. Joaquín Mota, who was also responsible for the Chemistry Chair for free, just as Don Manuel Urbizo did with the Chair of Pharmacy and Botany. Medical students start receiving classes at <i>Colegio de San Nicolás</i>
1849	The External Pathology Chair is opened for Medicine courses at <i>Colegio de San Nicolás</i> , directed free of charge by Don Vicente Franco
1850	Medical courses are cancelled due to problems in the quality of teaching, such as lack of laboratories and personnel
1858	Secularization. The San Juan Hospital in Morelia, coordinated by church members, becomes a Public Hospital under the authority of the State government
1859	Reopening of the Medicine courses at <i>Colegio de San Nicolás</i> with the 1843 curriculum; the Civil Hospital and a Coliseum are used for teaching
1861	The Civil Hospital of Morelia is moved to the Old San Diego Convent
1863	The Civil Hospital of Morelia is moved to old La Merced Convent. Closure of Medicine academic activities and <i>Colegio de San Nicolás</i> due to the French invasion
1865	The Central Public Health Council is constituted
1867	The Civil Hospital of Morelia is transferred to the Capuchin nuns former convent. Reestablishment of activities at <i>Colegio de San Nicolás</i> by indications of the Republican government
1869	The Medical Faculty is replaced by the Public Health Board of the State of Michoacán
1881	Profound reform of the medical degree course curriculum at <i>Colegio de San Nicolás</i>
1886	Approval of the first regulations for clinics and practical teaching is given at the Civil Hospital of Morelia. The Michoacán Museum is established with Nicolás León as director

(Continues)

Table 1. Chronology. Relevant aspects of the creation and evolution of institutions related to Medicine in Michoacán, in the 19th century (continued)

1894	The Public Health Board is replaced by the Superior Public Health Council. Doctors, pharmacists, midwives, phlebotomists, dentists, and minor surgery professors were trained in Morelia
1895	The Medical School of the State of Michoacán is constituted, annexed to <i>Colegio de San Nicolás</i> and the Civil Hospital, and starts its activities in 1896 in accordance with the Organic Law of Secondary and Professional Education (1894)

hospitals were inaugurated or continued operating in the 19th century:

- Pátzcuaro Civil Hospital, which in 1860 passed from the John of God Brothers to the State government, a similar evolution to that of its namesake in Morelia.
- Zamora Hospital, which is considered a continuation of one founded by Vasco de Quiroga. In 1863, General José López Uraga used part of its resources in the war against the French and then passed to the control of the State.
- Ecclesiastical Hospital of Zamora (1841).
- Tacámbaro Hospital (1857), which became a Public Hospital in 1877.
- La Piedad Hospital (1882).
- Civil Hospital of Uruapan (1890).
- Cotija Hospital (1895).
- Zitácuaro Hospital (1896).
- Puruándiro Hospital (1897)¹⁰.

It is worth mentioning the medical groups that were established in Morelia, Michoacán, during the 19th century, and that had in common short lives and absence of recognized material that documents their actions or their memories. They are, according to Romero-Flores (1935), the Medical Society of Michoacán, founded in 1869 and directed by Dr. Gabino R. Mota, which operated at *Colegio de San Nicolás*; the Academy of Medical Studies, made up of medical students (1874-1875), which met in the old Jesuit college of Michoacán; and two institutions with the name of Academy of Medicine that operated in 1876, one constituted by a group of people who met in the house of Don Ignacio Torres (1876), and another presided over by Dr. Mateo González and which held its meetings at *Colegio de San Nicolás*, which was attended by students and professors of the School of Medicine¹⁰.

Table 1 details relevant aspects of the creation and evolution of institutions related to Medicine in Michoacán during the 19th century^{4,10-12}.

Conclusions

A review of the institutions related to the practice of Medicine in Michoacán in the 19th century was carried out, addressing the emergence, functions and evolution of the most important, which were, in chronological order, the *Protomedicato*, the Medical Faculty and the Medicine Chair, *Colegio de San Nicolás*, Morelia San Juan Hospital (which later became a Public Hospital), the Public Health Central Council and the Public Health Board. In addition, the hospitals that existed in Michoacán during the 19th century are mentioned; many of them were initially run by church members and passed to be controlled by the state, transformed into public hospitals. Finally, the state medical groups made up of doctors or medical students are mentioned, of which their short existence and the absence, so far, of records that document their actions stand out. At the end of the 19th century, the State had a network of institutions that were run by it, regulation of medical practice had been established, and there was a school whose purpose was to train professionals in Medicine and Surgery, and it was guided by trained doctors, at *Colegio de San Nicolás* facilities, where a deep revision of the curriculum was carried out in 1881 in order to adapt it to the new demands of clinical practice, and practices were carried out at Morelia Civil Hospital, which was the first university hospital in the State with a regulation for clinics and Medicine practical teaching, established in 1886.

Ethical disclosures

Protection of human and animal subjects. The authors declare that no experiments have been performed on humans or animals for this research.

Confidentiality of data. The authors declare that no patient data appear in this article.

Right to privacy and informed consent. The authors declare that no patient data appear in this article.

Funding

The authors did not receive any sponsorship to carry out this article.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

References

1. Zavala Ramírez MC. El arte de conservar la salud en el Porfiriato. Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, Morelia, Michoacán; 2010. p. 38-9.
2. Sánchez Díaz G. Las contribuciones michoacanas a la Medicina y la Salud Pública en el siglo XIX. En: Martínez Cortés F, Guzmán Ávila JN, coordinadores. Ensayos sobre Historia de la Medicina. Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo; 2003. p. 129-30.
3. Martínez Cortés F, Guzmán Ávila N, coordinadores. Ensayos sobre Historia de la Medicina. Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, Morelia; 2003.
4. León N. Historia de la Medicina en Michoacán. Gobierno del Estado de Michoacán de Ocampo; 1984.
5. Flores y Troncoso F. Historia de la Medicina en México desde la época de los indios hasta el presente. México: Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social; 1982. p. 219.
6. Periódico Oficial del Gobierno del Estado de Michoacán de Ocampo, Tomo II, Núm. 50, México-Morelia, domingo 24 de junio de 1894, p. 3.
7. Periódico Oficial del Gobierno del Estado de Michoacán de Ocampo, Tomo IV, Núm. 2, México-Morelia, domingo 5 de enero de 1896, p. 3.
8. Periódico Oficial del Gobierno del Estado de Michoacán de Ocampo, Tomo IV, Núm. 9, jueves 30 de enero de 1896, p. 5.
9. Periódico Oficial del Gobierno del Estado de Michoacán de Ocampo, Tomo IV, Núm. 10, domingo 2 de febrero de 1896, p. 5.
10. Romero-Flores J. Historia de la Escuela de Medicina en Michoacán. En: Anales del Museo Nacional de México 1935, No. 2, p. 351-459.
11. Ballesteros-Olivares H. 175 años de la Facultad de Ciencias Médicas y Biológicas "Dr Ignacio Chávez" de la Universidad Michoacana. Bol Mex His Fil Med. 2006;9:21-30.
12. Figueroa Zamudio S. La cátedra de Medicina en Michoacán en el siglo XIX. En: Alvarado ML, Pérez Puente L, coordinadores. Cátedras y cate-dráticos en la historia de las universidades e instituciones de educación superior en México. I. La educación colonial. México: IISUE-UNAM; 2008. p. 339-363. Disponible en: http://132.248.192.241:8080/jspui/bitstream/IISUE_UNAM/38/1/La%20c%C3%A1tedra%20de%20medicina%20en%20Michoac%C3%A1n%20en%20el%20siglo%20XIX.pdf