

Serpent's egg

O ovo da serpente

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"Ethical progress is slow, but safe. Virtue attracts and teaches"
(José Ingenieros – El Hombre Mediocre)

Medical schools in Brazil currently admit 16,892 new students each year.

Medical residency programs, the paradigm for training competent specialist physicians, offer 10,196 direct access opportunities for new graduates each year.

The logical inference is that only 60% of graduated doctors have access to specialization courses.

Around 6,000 physicians without the necessary training will enter the work market.

What will they do?

Where will they work?

In what capacity will they examine patients and interpret or request complementary exams?

Or even worse, with what skill or ability will they perform invasive surgeries if they had no in-service training?

In Brazil there are now 197 medicine courses, the second highest number in the world after only India, with 202 and approximately 1,205,073,612 inhabitants.

The Ministry of Education authorized in June 2012 the creation of an additional nine private medical schools, to admit a total of 800 new students, 520 of them in South and Southeast regions, where 72% of Brazilian physicians already practice.

The new schools are located in the cities of Votuporanga (60 new admissions) and São José do Rio Preto (160, in two courses), both in the state of São Paulo, of Belo Horizonte (120) and Betim (120), in the state of Minas Gerais, and of Londrina (60), in the state of Paraná.

The others are in Recife/PE (120 admissions), Cajazeiras/PB (60) and Salvador/BA (100).

Seven new schools were created in 2011, five of which are private, one municipal and one state.

This year, in addition to the nine private schools already mentioned, another federal institution was created.

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Overall, there are 82 courses in public federal, state, and municipal medical schools as opposed to 114 in private institutions, created mainly between 1967 to 1970 (at the height of the military government years), 1997 to 1999 (during Fernando Henrique Cardoso's second presidential term) and from 2002 onwards (during the Lula and Dilma Rousseff governments).

Consequently, it is expected that none of the physicians obtaining their degrees from any of those new private institutions will work in cities or regions in need of physicians.

They will be part of a saturated system where quality institutions are already full of physicians.

They will have to compete fiercely for opportunities in good medical residency programs, which will only admit a selected few.

They will resist working in the outskirts of the large cities where they studied and will further inflate the capitals.

Distinguished professor Adib Jatene once wrote that wrong decisions like these and others serve only to discourage those who still believe it is possible to correct the iniquities created by corporate or political influence, reinforcing the idea that is useless to fight for better days.

The government is inconsequentially incubating a serpent's egg which, when it hatches, is going to devour us all, through incompetent new health professionals, a degraded labor market and a precarious health system.