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THE CLINICAL CASE: A STRATEGY FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING

There are different teaching strategies for ensuring significant learning, including research seminars, workshops, directed independent reading, the clinical case, the problem-based learning methods, in-depth lines of study, etc.

In many departments of the clinical area, such as the Department of Pediatrics, a clinical case taken from real life is used as an effective learning method. It consists of providing the case to all participants (students, professors, pediatricians) for study and analysis. This study is discussed in small groups and the solution or possible responses are presented in a meeting scheduled for this purpose.

As its main objective, this type of strategy aims to stimulate participants to interpret the information provided, integrate and apply the knowledge that they possess in order to solve a problem. In addition, it encourages research and the exploration of different articles in indexed journals with the goal of strengthening their response —or of contrasting it with responses of the authors—, of comparing their solution with those of other groups, of acquiring new knowledge, and also of learning to work as part of a team.

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Clinical cases aim, among other things, to achieve the following:

- To make students aware of an unusual presentation of a frequent disease. For example, a child that seeks attention for abdominal pain as a consequence of basilar pneumonia, which could skew the diagnosis.
- To present an infrequent case for which the diagnosis is not easy, and review the topic, such as congenital tuberculosis.
- To analyze a clinical syndrome that has different etiologies, and to learn how to arrive at a correct diagnosis, as is the case of the whooping cough.
- To present a new diagnostic procedure.
- To be aware of psychosocial aspects that may be fundamental in disease prevention, as may be the case of child abuse.
- To use a case to critically review the literature that exists on the disease.

Because of their high academic value, these cases are chosen purposefully for their oral and written presentation in such a way that the student may practice and strengthen their ability to write scientific text for publication.