International exchange program between medical schools: the relevance of a clinical research training in nutrition

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Students of the 4th and 5th years of Medicine of the Comenius University Martin – Slovakia, in the context of a Clinical Research Training in Nutrition in 2009 (Training coordinator: Prof. Paula Ravasco): Standing Committee on Research Exchange (SCORE) of International Federation of Medical Students’ Associations, performed at the Unit of Nutrition and Metabolism, Institute of Molecular Medicine of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Lisbon (Unit Coordinator: Professor Maria Camilo). Unit of Nutrition and Metabolism, Institute of Molecular Medicine of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Lisbon and RED MEI CYTED. Director of the Radiotherapy Department of the University Hospital of Santa Maria (CHLN), Portugal.

Introduction

Nutritional Sciences are not usually included in Medical Curricula. Two Medical Students of the Martin University of Slovakia chose to pursue a Research Training in Nutrition, during their International Intercampus Training to promote Clinical Research: Standing Committee on Research Exchange (SCORE) of International Federation of Medical Students’ Associations. This paper conveys information on the dynamics, organization and pertinence of this INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM BETWEEN MEDICAL SCHOOLS, a programme financed by the EU & ERASMUS, of which several European Medical School are collaborators including the Medical School of Lisbon and our Research Unit.

Methods & Aims

Medical Students developed a full time Clinical Research Training in Nutrition during 1 month (July 2009) at Unit of Nutrition and Metabolism-Institute Molecular Medicine of the Faculty of Medicine of University of Lisbon in collaboration with Radiotherapy Department of Santa Maria University Hospital. The aims of this Research Training in Nutrition were: 1) Learning/applying specific methods on scientific research, e.g. literature search in international database PubMed & create a bibliography database using reference management software EndNote®; 2) Write two short scientific papers on pre-defined topics: “Nutrition Intervention Protocols in Oncology” (on the 1st 2 weeks) & “Body composition and prognosis in oncology” (on the remaining 2 weeks); 3) Prepare/give 2 presentations of their results and a critical overview of the pertinence of the themes developed, as well as of the Research Training itself, using PowerPoint®; 4) Introduction to Nutritional Sciences and the relevance of the integration of Nutrition Care in the clinical practice and routine, subject recognised by the students as unknown, since it’s not included in the Medical curriculum; this was indeed the central reason for these 2 Medical Students to chose our Unit to undergo this International Training; 5) To contact with the Hospital reality at the Radiotherapy Department and to practice body composition evaluation and understand the dynamics of an integrated nutrition protocol. All of the students’ activities resulted from their integration in an ongoing large scale Clinical Nutrition Research Project in Oncology in collaboration with the University Hospital.

Conclusions

Projects aimed to develop/expand their knowledge in Clinical Nutrition in a real setting, as well as learning/applying internationally accepted specific methods in the context of Nutrition evaluation and Research.

References