

Orthopedics and Traumatology Residencies in Argentina

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Committee of Residencies and/or Equivalent Systems of the AAOT



The medical residency is a postgraduate education and training system that was once associated with residence within the hospital (hence its name).

One of our Committee’s goals is to ensure that the quality of resident training is maintained and increased, and that it is implemented properly. However, we are increasingly encountering Residencies that fail to meet the minimum standards for accreditation, leaving us to wonder if we are appropriately training future traumatologists.

The Committee analyzes the number of resident positions available in our country, both in the private and public sectors, and compares it to the number of residents trained in other countries in Latin America and the world. In 2022, 346 positions were offered in 140 centers. Thus, if all of these open positions were filled, no residents quit during their residency, and no graduates departed, our country would gain 346 new orthopedists per year.

We compared the number of Residents trained in Argentina to that of other countries, as well as the relationship between each of them and the number of inhabitants: this year, Argentina trained one traumatologist for every 131,000 inhabitants; Colombia, one for every 678,000; Uruguay, one for every 315,000 inhabitants; Ecuador, one for every 840,000; France, one for every 500,000; Spain, one for every 169,000; and the United States, one for every 379,000 (Table).

Table. Comparison of residents trained in Argentina and in other countries

	Population	Residents of Orthopedics and Traumatology by year	Resident/inhabitants	Resident/100,000 inhabitants	Argentina/other country relationship
ARGENTINA	45,376,763	346	1/131,147	0.76	1
Spain	47,326,687	280	1/169,024	0.59	1.3 / 1
Uruguay	3,474,000	11	1/315,818	0.32	2.4 / 1
USA	329,500,000	868	1/379,608	0.26	2.9 / 1
France	60,110,000	120	1/500,917	0.20	3.8 / 1
Colombia	51,600,000	76	1/678,947	0.15	5.2 / 1
Ecuador	17,640,000	21	1/840,000	0.12	6.4 / 1

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Those who aspire to enter a residency program undoubtedly want as many openings as there are candidates or more Resident opportunities in the best training centers. From the perspective of some hospitals, clinics, and sanatoriums, it is beneficial to have many residents, since they represent the cheapest labor on the market, mainly measured in man-hours. On the other hand, in many of the institutions we visited, residents performed tasks that would normally be assigned to the administrative sector or auxiliaries, such as nurses, orderlies, radiologists, and so on, abusing a dominant position in the system that is often tainted by bad habits.

Regardless of physical location, city, or area, the public health system appears to strive to train a large number of traumatologists. However, we believe that there are no scientific grounds for training such a number of traumatologists. Furthermore, in a practical specialty such as Orthopedics and Traumatology, where knowledge is important but so is practice, the relation between the number of residents and procedures completed is inversely proportional, implying inadequate training.

In this regard, we know that the percentage of failures in our Association's Certification Exam has been increasing in recent years. According to the analysis performed on this evaluation instance, there are Residencies whose residents typically do not access the AAOT Specialist Certification, possibly because they do not intend to do so and, possibly because they fail the exam, and, at the same time, we see residents of centers whose applicants historically passed the exam and who, in recent years, have also had difficulties in that instance.

This circumstance indicates that, at least in some areas, the level of training is likely to be decreasing compared to past years, which concerns us and should concern those in charge of opening new programs or expanding those already existing.

On the other hand, there is a high percentage of vacant positions. Different reasons motivate this desertion, including low pay, high workload, lack of interest in training, etc. Taking these vacant places into account, perhaps we should reconsider the idea of continuing to increase positions or training centers.

In addition to the training aspect, we must consider that introducing more and more colleagues into the system implies a disadvantage to ourselves when calculating fees due to an evident imbalance between supply and demand.

Based on what has been stated so far, we believe that new residencies or new positions for residents should not be opened, but rather that existing residents and traumatologists' training and working conditions should be improved.

For all of these reasons, we feel that the Asociación Argentina de Ortopedia y Traumatología and its Residency Committee must be guides and protagonists of Argentine Orthopedics and Traumatology training and practice.

We believe it is essential that the AAOT collaborate with the National Ministry of Health and the provincial ministries, as well as universities, in the forecasting, regulation, and encouragement of actions that improve the quality of traumatology, rather than delegating that function to other institutions that, unlike the AAOT, lack the training or capacity to carry it out. To that end, the Residency Committee collaborated with the National Ministry of Health and other entities to create a reference framework that should serve as the core regulation for all residencies, but we are certain that much more work remains to be done.

Finally, we invite you to reflect on the number of vacancies offered each year and the quality of the current residency system in many ways, including the number of residents at each training center.