

Medical residency in Germany: an open option for Mexican physicians

Edgar Santos¹, Humberto Silos², Arturo Olivares-Rivera^{1,2}, Valente Fragosa Padilla³ and Renán Sánchez-Porras^{1,4}

¹Department of Neurosurgery, University of Heidelberg, Heidelberg; ²Department of General Surgery, Schön Klinik Nürnberg-Fürth, Nurnberg, Germany; ³Neurosurgical Practice Lake Constance, Singen; ⁴Department of Neurosurgery, Ludwigsburg Hospital, Ludwigsburg Germany

Germany is one of the largest economies in Europe and has an unquestionable political, scientific, and technological influence. It possesses 82 million inhabitants and has a health system with full coverage, which is funded by both public and private insurance organizations. In contrast, in Mexico, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), there is an ambivalent development in the spectrum of diseases that cause a larger number of deaths, on the one hand, in common with developed countries, an increase in diseases related to food consumption patterns and sedentary life that causes obesity, and conditions such as diabetes mellitus, heart diseases, and arteriosclerosis in the adult population, and on the other hand, diseases that are common to third-world countries, which have to do with lack of basic medical services coverage, potable water, garbage collection system, lack of sewage systems, and wastewater treatment, which causes serious gastrointestinal diseases, especially at pediatric ages, while the affront of social differences and economic insecurity promotes an increase in deaths for violent causes in the young population segment.

Not only there is stagnation in the health sector, the socioeconomic sector, and the purely economic sector but also in the science and technology sector, with the government and its structures not enabling simple essential medical coverage, let alone advances in Mexico's educational system, where there is an excess of poorly qualified human resources and a shortage of job opportunities, which favors the development of

unfavorable working conditions for employees. This brings along with an increase in the desire of growing numbers of professionals of excellence to develop abroad. Currently, in Germany, there is a deficit in healthcare professionals. Current labor reforms in the health system limited doctors' work days, thus increasing the necessity to hire more qualified personnel to thoroughly cover the work days. This is further compounded by an increase in the number of doctors in the process of retiring, which has given origin to openness for many foreign doctors to work in Germany. Hence, the government had to open its borders and facilitate the recognition of studies even of citizens from non-European countries.

According to the German National Chamber of Physicians (Bundesärztekammer) statistics, this country has a total of 378,607 physicians, of which 46,721 are of foreign origin. Most foreign doctors come from Romania (4285), Greece (3118), and Syria (2895). Mexico, as such, does not appear in the statistics as an autonomous entity but grouped under the title "foreign physicians from North America," which accounts for 404 (<http://www.bundesaerztekammer.de/ueber-uns/aerztestatistik/aerztestatistik-2016/>).

Key points of interest in the German system

- Hospital system: there are different types of hospitals in the country; there are the University Hospitals (considered as the option with the highest prestige), regional, community-based, and

Correspondence:

Edgar Santos
E-mail: dredgarsantos@hotmail.com

Date of modified version reception: 01-06-2017

Date of acceptance: 12-06-2017

DOI: 10.24875/GMM.M17000020

Gac Med Mex. 2017;153:470-471

Contents available at PubMed

www.gacetamedicademexico.com

private hospitals, as well as rehabilitation clinics. This enables variability in the choice of hospital to work according to the applicant's academic profile.

- Working conditions: In general terms, working conditions include a 40-h work week, which, in most cases, are unable to be respected; however, the produced extra time is compensated either with free time or overtime payment. In addition, there is around 30 business day-vacation a year and 3 days for congresses.
- Clinical work and education: Unlike the Mexican residency system, medical residency in Germany is seen as a job. There is no marked hierarchical distinction between the years of residency. Work is highly individualized and in close collaboration with the staff physician. When residents have to stay on duty, there is usually a single resident in charge of the department, with a staff physician telephonically available. Medical training is highly self-taught and it is usually practice oriented, based on the "learning by doing" principle. In addition, there is the opportunity to do research, which is mostly carried out at university hospitals. Doctors who make science find more open doors and receive more and better job offers.
- Fees: Residents and specialists' salaries are nationally established by law and can be publically looked up (<http://oeffentlicher-dienst.info/aerzte/>). In general terms, they range from 2500 to 10,000 Euros a month.

Opportunity for Mexican physicians

The probabilities for a Mexican doctor to migrate are mainly related to economic means, working conditions, and the ability to surpass oneself. Nevertheless, what is it required to join the German health system? It can be looked up in this link: <http://www.bundesaerzte-kammer.de/aerzte/internationales/medizinstudium-und-aerztliche-taetigkeit-in-deutschland/>. Officially, the following basic points are required:

- German language, C1 level.
- Medical studies in Mexico at the WHO-recognized university.
- In some states, medical knowledge has to be accredited by means of a standardization examination (Kenntnisprüfung).
- A job offering by some hospital (not always a requirement).
- Other official documents translated into German by an institution recognized by the European Union.

No national residency examination is required. The particular hospital chooses the residents depending on the curriculum, and especially on the level of German language, history of practices made in German hospitals and working experience in Germany with German patients.

Benefits for Mexico

Although we agree that it is not ideal for an intellectual to leave his/her country, Mexican talent has more difficulties at home to find the possibilities to contribute to his/her own country and mankind, whereas countries such as China and India, and even European countries, make it easy for their best students to migrate; since although they are not able to train all of them at home, they do have the vision that, in a country with adequate conditions for his/her development, the student can become an international reference, revolutionize an area or create new areas of knowledge, or industries. Historically, many of the best Mexican doctors have also been trained abroad. In summary, when a Mexican of excellence arrives to Germany, Mexico has benefit in different forms:

- Academic links between national and foreign quality institutions.
- Facilitation of exchange for more people.
- Transfer of knowledge and technology.
- Cooperation in transnational projects.
- Increase of Mexico's prestige in the world.
- Return as better qualified workforce.
- Improvement of the Mexican health system by taking example from the German health system.