

The last chance. Bringing back training for the Sports Medicine specialisation

La última oportunidad. Recuperación de la formación de la especialidad de Medicina del Deporte

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A long process began 17 years ago, in 2005, that we are convinced will soon end in applying the Royal Decree R.D. regulating cross-discipline training for Specialists (BOE 20 July 2022)¹. This process originated from the European standard outlining training in all medical specialisations that must be completed during residency, full-time and in a hospital environment, replacing the training system using specific specialist colleges.

In Spain, the law on healthcare professions 44/2003² is set by the 2008 legislation to transform the specialisation, including the European Directive on Medical Specialisations.

This will not be easy. The conditions set by this standard are meticulous, demanding and require implication from anyone interested in giving this specialisation the prestige that we all think it deserves in our society.

The work has been relentless ever since. An enormous effort has been put into this eagerly-awaited recovery of the specialisation and, although not the subject of this editorial, it is essential to mention some significant moments in this process.

The Spanish Society of Sports Medicine has never shied away from its responsibility and has always spearheaded this claim and the tasks to put it into place. At the start, this was led by FEDAMEFYDE, working with the Specialisation Commission and in 2014, the Inter-regional Sports Medicine Commission was set up, comprising official representatives from the Autonomous Regions, AEPSAD and SEMED.

At several points, it seemed likely that the specialisation training was about to be brought back.

Minister Pajín stated, in the Congress plenary session on 13 April 2011³, that "the physical education and sports medicine specialisations plus legal and forensic medicine, currently taken in the degree programme, will be reinforced by considering them as specialisations to be included in the MIR (Resident Medical Intern) system," although President Zapatero resigned four weeks later leaving no time to pass this through the Council of Ministers.

In 2014, President Rajoy's government approved the core subject decree for specialised training⁴ which would have brought back training in our specialisation, although this was repealed a few weeks later and

withdrawn by accepting a contentious-administrative appeal brought by the Spanish Immunology Society, according to the ruling of 12 December 2016, by the Supreme Court⁵.

In this term of office, the Ministry of Health executive board run by the director general of Professional Regulation set up a technical operating group to determine access to the qualification for a specialist doctor in Sports Medicine. It comprised representatives from the Ministry of Health, AEPSAD, CSD, Autonomous Communities who promised to cover the costs of training Sports Medicine specialists (Catalonia, Andalusia, Castillas-León, Asturias and the Balearic Islands) and the Spanish Society of Sports Medicine that coordinated the group, with the mandate of drafting a training programme adapted to the European directive, a draft of the specific Royal Decree for Sports Medicine as for Legal and Forensic Medicine⁶ and the corresponding budgeting.

In October 2020, with these tasks practically finalised, Dr Rodrigo Gutierrez, general director of Professional Regulation at the Ministry of Health, resigned and was replaced by Dr Viçenc Martínez. Several meetings were held with the latter and he seemed to want to reach a satisfactory solution, but then he also resigned.

Contact was renewed with the new general director of Professional Regulation at the Ministry of Health, Dr Celia Gómez, and it became clear that she did not value the work carried out so far. It was decided that the specialised training would be carried out via the Royal Decree that had been approved that year¹.

The Royal Decree determines a few directives that we would like to mention.

Application for the specialisation. The procedure to request a new Health Sciences specialist qualification could be initiated by one or several national scientific societies validly established in relation to the corresponding area of Health Sciences specialisation, that confirms the representation of at least sixty percent of professionals in this area or by the Human Resources Commission for the National Health System.

It is highly improbable that the Human Resources Commission of the National Health System would request the Sports Medicine specialisation so, in all likelihood, the application should be made by

the Spanish Society of Sports Medicine, the only entity that meets the requirements in the Royal Decree.

Representation. The standard determines that the scientific society must confirm representation of at least sixty percent of the professionals in that area. With a view to having to present nominal representations, a census of specialists has been drawn up and they were all sent a representation document so that the SEMED might apply for the speciality.

Specific nature. The R.D. determines that the specialisation must represent an extensive and differentiated field of practice in Health Sciences and develop an extensive set of contents and skills that are significantly different to those already included in other specialisations or qualifications in Health Sciences.

In this respect, the following content is considered to be specific and exclusive to the specialisation: competitive sport care (musculoskeletal system pathology related to the sport, prevention of injuries, strength tests and medical suitability check-ups) and doping, with significant exercise prescription content.

Financial viability. The specialisations must be financially feasible in the long term and guarantee practice by specialists.

Finalising the procedure. If the ruling goes against it, a new application cannot be presented for the same specialisation for five years following the date of this ruling.

The Spanish Society of Sports Medicine and the Sports Medicine Task Force are working together to present an application that meets all the requirements determined by the standard in force and they fully expect for this specialisation to be restored.

It is expected that these wishes will be echoed by the entire collective of specialist doctors and any that work in Sports Medicine who wish

to take the specialisation, and it is understood that if the application is rejected, it would mean the de facto disappearance of the specialisation as a new application could not be presented for five years following this ministerial decision.

We are convinced that the doctors involved are going to pull together and work towards this common goal so that this opportunity is not lost.

Bibliography

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6. BOE 205. 29 de julio de 2020. Real Decreto 704/2020, de 28 de julio, por el que se establece el acceso al título de médico/a especialista en Medicina Legal y Forense por el sistema de residencia.