

PHILANTHROPIC PRIZE TO REMEMBER THAT LATIN AMERICAN CHILDREN'S HEALTH IS A PRIORITY

El Premio Colsubsidio de Investigación en Pediatría is a biennial initiative begun in 1992 to promote and support scientific population studies focused on improving the health and social conditions of Colombian children. As a result of the initiative's success and of the great interest shown by many, the prize became international in 2000 and since then has been open to all of Central and South America. The projects are ranked by how well they were carried out and how effective they were. The top three divide a \$20 000 prize. A private, nonprofit, social organization, Colsubsidio, provides the prize and covers organizational expenses. Colsubsidio (Caja Colombiana de Subsidio Familiar) was founded in 1957 and currently has about 500 000 members (<http://www.colsubsidio.com>).

For the last four international editions, 415 studies from 20 different Latin American countries, designed by 326 authors and 1 387 coauthors, and involving more than 800 000 children, were submitted. The papers covered a wide range of problems and approaches—a fact that is partly evident simply by the variety of countries represented by the 16 winners: Colombia, Chile, Cuba, Guatemala, El Salvador, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay.

Since 2000, to assist in disseminating the findings submitted to the biennial appointment, a few of the papers are published, after a formal editorial process, in *Saludarte*, a simple, independent journal written in Spanish, indexed in Embase with abstracts in English, and supported by Colsubsidio's health-related branch.

Over a few years and with limited expenses, a Latin American network of health and social professionals, researchers, and institutions of different sizes and origins, with the common aim of improving children's (and their families') well-being, was set up.

Despite improvements in the last decade, infant mortality and morbidity rates in Latin America and the Caribbean remain higher than in other regions of the world, with huge intracountry differences (1, 2). The region is currently on track to meet the child mortality target, which consists of cutting by two-thirds the death rates in children younger than 5 years by 2015 (3). The six leading causes

of disability in the 0- to 14-year-old population of the region, according to the global disease burden, based on disability-adjusted life years, are perinatal conditions, diarrheal diseases, lower respiratory tract infections, congenital anomalies, mental retardation, and meningitis (4). A large number of diseases and adverse conditions in childhood are due to preventable causes that most likely would decrease if inequities were at least limited through collaborative initiatives, partnerships, use of expertise, and, obviously, funds aimed at "putting children at the center" (5).

The goal of the Premio Colsubsidio, with its biennial deadline, is to make child health a health priority by establishing an active network in Latin America, a goal and challenge that should be encouraged.

The next Premio Colsubsidio appointment (9^a Bienal de pediatría: para que crezca la vida) will once again be held in Bogotá, Colombia, at the beginning of December 2008. Projects should be submitted for evaluation by 30 June 2008 (pediatria.premio@colsubsidio.com). For more information, please visit the following website: <http://www.colsubsidio.com>

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