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Fundación Dermatología Comunitaria Argentina

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Taking Professor Roberto Estrada-Castañón's Mexican programme as an example, a new programme has started in Neuquén Province (Patagonia, Argentina) to provide accessible dermatological services for rural communities, combining teaching and clinical care.

Fundación Dermatología Comunitaria Argentina is a not-for-profit association whose principal objective is to develop educational activities to prevent, detect and treat common skin conditions. These activities are held in the Argentine Republic.

The programme follows the Mexican model with working days (*jornadas*) in different rural areas. A free dermatology clinic service is offered to each community visited, where specialists work together with local practitioners. The main objective is education of local healthcare workers in common dermatological conditions. Lectures are given as workshops, focusing on diagnostic tools, referral criteria, therapeutic options, how to perform a skin biopsy, etc. Local practitioners may present cases and receive help, advice and education.

One of the main focuses of the work is to produce educational material for people in rural areas and at the same time offer medical assistance. The information provided serves the needs of the community and the non-specialist medical practitioner.

Sun-induced skin conditions are the most prevalent dermatoses found in the region. Consequently, Dermatología Comunitaria

Argentina has added an element to the Mexican model – primary school education to reinforce the sun protection message. This part of the programme is aimed at children between the ages of 4 and 6 years, explaining the beneficial effects of sunlight and the harmful effects of ultraviolet radiation using games and costumes. Each child receives a 'Skin scientist' diploma and the teachers receive a booklet enabling them to continue to work on the programme.

So far, seven *jornadas* have been held, reaching 461 healthcare workers and assistants, including 1 423 consultations. There have been 19 photo-education workshops, reaching 1 260 children and their teachers.

The benefits are numerous: communities receive high-quality primary healthcare at low cost, healthcare workers are trained, epidemiological data are collected and there is a professional forum for the exchange of ideas and information.

The key to the success of this community initiative is passion, commitment and teamwork.

Volunteers willing to participate in these activities should arrive by their own means at Neuquén Province, having contacted Dr Casas in advance to arrange dates, accommodation and other issues.

For more information, photos and contact details see the Facebook page: dermatologia comunitaria argentina.



A free dermatology clinic at Chos Malal, 2012.



Children in the sun protection workshops.



A new 'Skin scientist'.