



---

Latin American Association of Social Medicine (ALAMES) 25th Anniversary  
XI Latin American Social Medicine Congress

## Health in the Political and Social Agenda

November 17-21, 2009, Bogota, Colombia

*Mauricio Torres*



Latin America is a region of contrasts. Here, we find both expressions of inequity and of hope; concentrations of extreme poverty and extreme wealth; authoritarianism and democratization; the voracity of free market and popular participation. Public health here lies between darkness, resistance, and hope. The darkness is reflected in the implementation of neoliberal health policies which regard health care services as commodities. Resistance is expressed in actions organized to prevent the loss or privatization of public health care systems and networks. Hope derives from the development of health care models that acknowledge and guarantee the status of health care as a universal and fundamental human right. Even then, inequities in living standards and access to health care are evident. They have been increasing, a tendency that shows no sign of changing.

Within this context, several currents have become evident in terms of critical knowledge, practices, and theory within the health sector. It is necessary to understand each of these processes to identify the actors and the resulting correlation of forces. What are the hegemonic tendencies and which others have been excluded? What is the impact of these tendencies on the health of the general population? What have been the advances in terms of establishing access to healthcare as a right? What are the obstacles in making this right a reality? How can we confront these obstacles and deepen the egalitarian process?

ALAMES, in the year of its 25th anniversary, is organizing the XI Latin American Congress on Social Medicine as the forum for the analysis of the role of health care in the political and social agenda. The celebration of its 25 years of existence will allow

ALAMES to evaluate both its contributions and errors in the understanding of health related phenomena in the region and in the construction of health as a fundamental human right. This evaluation will allow us to plan for the future and define the best ways of organizing for the next 25 years.

ALAMES invites all its members, as well as members of social movements and organizations, graduate and undergraduate students, researchers, professors, health care professionals, officials and citizens in general who might be interested in the implementation of the right to health care and the development of social medicine in Latin America to get actively involved in the preparation of and participation in this congress.

### **Objectives**

1. To generate a process of political, academic, and social dia-

logue among the organizations and social movements, health care and academic institutions. This exchange will allow the health care issues to be situated within the Latin American political agenda. It will acknowledge the different perspectives and emphasis in the social determination of health care through a prospective and retrospective analysis of health care as a right and equity as a goal.

2. A balance sheet of the developments, contributions, and difficulties of Latin American social medicine during the 25 years of ALAMES' with the development of proposals for its future agenda and an outline of its directives in the next 25 years.

**Healthcare in the social and political agenda in Latin America.**

**Areas of Investigation**

*1. The current standing of health care and the right to access it in Latin America: advances, obstacles and challenges towards its implementation.*

Goals: to situate the analysis in the context of processes and tendencies which today affect and determine the materialization (or its lack) of the right to healthcare access.

Subjects that may be included, are: equity, standards of living and their interdependence with other factors, free trade agreements, migration, health conditions along international borders, work force flexibility in the health care sector, health workforce scarcity, processes of social movement and resistance within the framework of social determinants expressed in the diversity of geographic origin, social class, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnic subjectivity which affect and generate the deterioration and inequity of healthcare access throughout the continent.

*2. Tendencies in Latin American health care systems and policies: contributions of social medicine in guaranteeing the right and equity of access to health care services.*

Goal: To deepen the characterization of the options for health care policies and systems in the region, in relation to fundamental rights and the perspective of equity, taking into account social determinants such as: geographic origin, class, ethnic background, sexual orientation, and gender.

Key themes: realities and prospects for the right to healthcare access and equality; its universality and local specificity; integrality and fragmentation; exclusion; the public and the private; univer-

sal health care systems and insurance; systems based on supply and demand; institutionalized and social participation.

*3. Social and political mobilizations to guarantee the right to health and equity of access to health care in Latin America: balances and proposals for a regional agenda.*

Goals: to determine the role and participation of social medicine in the construction of movements and agendas for the right and equality of health care access.

To identify groups and key institutions working in relation to health care rights and equity implementation.

To characterize the different ways of making these rights a reality and of guaranteeing equal access from the above mentioned movements.

To promote the development of a political agenda as a meeting point for multiple social actors.

For more information, please contact:

ALAMES XI Congress  
General Coordination:  
Mauricio Torres  
maot99@yahoo.es



Visit our blog at [www.socialmedicine.org](http://www.socialmedicine.org)