Dental education comprises a variety of competences and fine motor skills that must be acquired by students not only in the classroom but also in preclinical laboratories and dental clinics. In Peru, the average duration of dental undergraduate programs is five years. While it is true that curriculums vary from one school to another, preclinical and clinical activities are usually initiated during the third and fifth semesters, respectively. While the curriculums of Peruvian dental school programs tend to emphasize the importance of know-how and clinical training, undergraduate students are also trained in complementary skills that enable them to deepen their understanding of the profession beyond the dental chair.

In recent decades, due to changes in the Peruvian higher education system, the development of research competences among undergraduate dental students has gained enormous importance within Peruvian dental schools. Today, indicators of achievement are measured by more than the number of theses defended, and the list of scientific articles published each year continues to grow, as does the engagement of students in other scientific activities, such as research workshops. It is in this context that the introduction of the concept of formative research into the dental curriculum has constituted a significant advance towards improvements in dental education throughout Peru.

Formative research is a pedagogical strategy aimed at developing among students the approaches and abilities required as part of the scientific research process. It has been widely accepted that the introduction of formative research strategies increases students' curiosity, stimulating their interest in obtaining the skills needed to create a «culture of research» and to enhance their own professional development. This process calls for the active participation of faculty members, not only those involved in teaching standard research methodology courses, but also those responsible for teaching basic science and clinical courses.
Currently, the Universidad Científica del Sur school of Dentistry includes formative research strategy in its curriculum from the first semester of dental education. Students are required to submit research work in the form of a case report or literature review in order to obtain their bachelor’s degree. Also, a dental surgeon license is only granted once the candidate has successfully defended a thesis in the form of an original research paper or a systematic review.

These advances would not have been attained without the benefit of a detailed plan which gradually introduces students to basic research skills throughout the standard five-year program, through the work of a team of motivated teachers. The publications of our students in local and indexed journals stand as clear indicators of the success of this strategy. The number of publications by undergraduate students is expected to increase in the short term, thereby helping to position our dental school, as one of the leading higher education institutions in the country, with a reputation based upon scientific research and clinical and academic training of the very highest level.

In this edition of our journal, we present our first original paper written entirely in the English language, in a further indication of the commitment of our editorial team to achieving the indexation of our journal in the Latindex and ScieLo databases. Our goals are clear, and we continue to work towards them with our optimism and passion for research undimmed.

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