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SCIENTIFIC LETTER

Evolution of the choice of pediatric places by resident interns during the period 2010–2025

Evolución de la elección de plazas de pediatría por los médicos internos residentes durante el periodo 2010–2025

Dear Editor:

The specialized medical training system known as the MIR (''Medical Intern Resident'' program) is the pathway established to pursue accreditation in a medical specialty in Spain. To secure a residency spot, candidates must take a single national exam, which accounts for 90% of the final admission grade and is combined with the grade point average of their undergraduate medical degree, which accounts for the remaining 10%. In each annual application cycle, candidates choose a specialty based on their ranking, and therefore this selection process indirectly reflects the appeal and interest that each specialty holds for future specialists. Specialty training takes place at accredited centers over a period of 4–5 years, depending on the specialty; in the case of pediatrics, it lasts 4 years.

The objective of our study was to describe trends in the selection of residency spots in pediatrics after the MIR exam over the past 15 years (2010–2025).

To this end, we designed an observational descriptive study of the selection of pediatrics residency spots in the annual medical specialty residency application cycles between 2010 and 2025. We excluded spots at the Clínica Universidad de Navarra because, during part of the study period, the selection process for those spots was based on specific requirements established by the institution.

In the 2010–2025 period, a total of 7096 pediatric residency positions were offered over 16 application cycles. In 2010, there were 406 pediatrics spots out of a total of 6799 MIR spots, while in 2025, there were 516 out of a total of 9007 spots. There was a 27.1% increase in the number of available pediatrics residency spots, while the total number of MIR spots increased by 24.5%. During the same period, the last available pediatrics spot was awarded to the candidate ranked at the 3818th position in 2010, compared to the candidate at the 5283rd position in 2025, which corresponds to a 38.4% increase in the ranking position of the candidate selecting the last available pediatrics spot.

As for the choices made by the top-ranked candidates in each application cycle, in 2010, 13 of the top 100 candidates chose pediatrics as their specialty (ranked at positions 5, 7, 13, 17, 21, 33, 35, 50, 55, 56, 60, 68, 92), in addition to 61 of the top 500, and 126 of the top 1000. In contrast, in 2025, only 1 of the top 100 (ranked at position 86), 8 of the top 500, and 37 of the top 1000 chose pediatrics. Fig. 1 shows the trends in the selection of pediatrics spots in each application cycle among the top 1000 candidates.

To complete the study, we selected the ten hospitals in Spain that offered the largest numbers of pediatric residency spots. Table 1 shows the ranking position of the last spot offered at each of these hospitals in the different application cycles. In all of these hospitals, these spots were filled with candidates with larger ranking positions in 2025 compared to 2010, with increases in position number ranging from 28.6% to 763.5%. The largest increases occurred in the hospitals whose spots filled out earliest in 2010, such as Hospital 12 de Octubre.

Based on the collected data, it appears that the specialty of pediatrics has become less appealing to MIR candidates. The reasons are probably multifactorial and may be common to several medical specialties with similar characteristics. As a hypothesis, we propose five possible causes, whose actual significance we intend to analyze soon by surveying MIR candidates to effectively determine the reasons behind this trend:

1 The increasing hardship of on-call shifts, which in the case of hospital-based emergency care entail 24-h shifts with hardly any time to rest.[1]
2 The increasing frequency of conflicts and acts of aggression, which are more common in specialties that involve greater interaction with patients and families and in the primary care setting.[2]
3 The lack of recognition of pediatric subspecialties or specific training areas, combined with the increasingly widespread requirement to extend training for a fifth year—which is neither officially recognized nor compensated by the National Health System.[3]
4 The progressive deterioration of working conditions in primary care, where most pediatricians work.[4,5]

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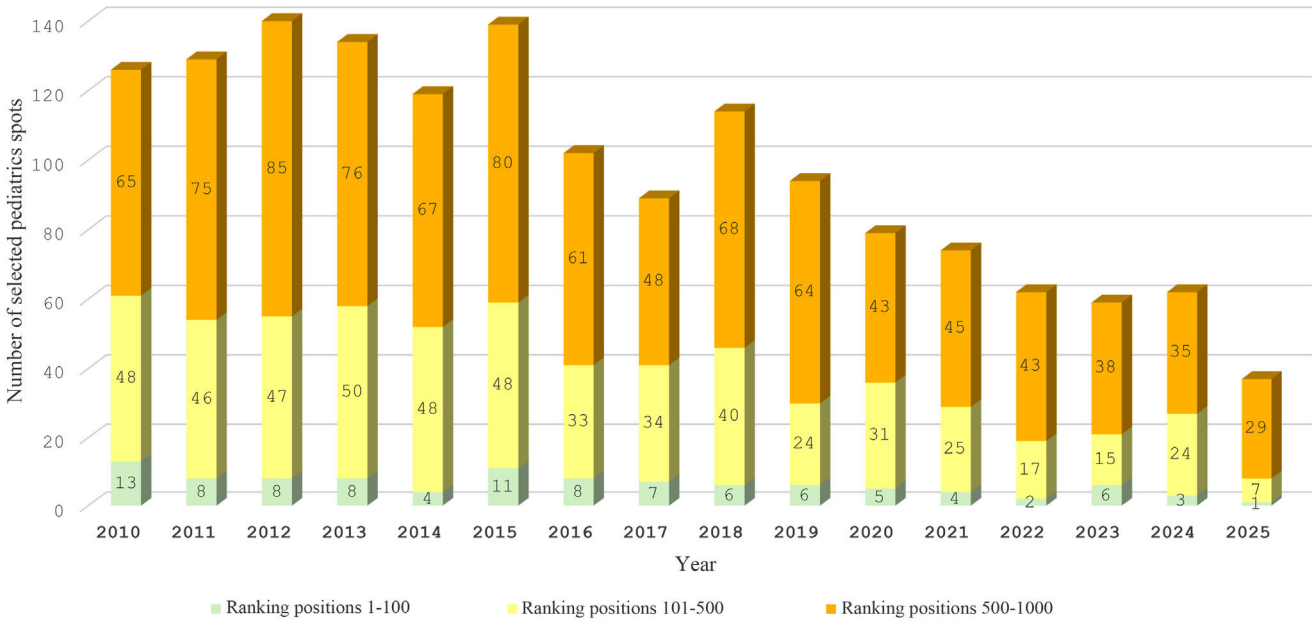

Figure 1 Number of pediatrics residency spots selected by among the top 1000 candidates in each application cycle.

Table 1 Ranking position of the candidate that filled the last pediatrics residency spot offered by the 10 hospitals with the highest number of available spots in each application cycle.

Hospital (number of spots)	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Hospital Universitario La Paz (20)	1345	1089	1154	1263	1209	858	1104	1365	1146	1781	1907	1570	2851	2199	2567	3056
Hospital Infantil Universitario Niño Jesús (11)	966	826	755	776	710	924	1085	1276	980	1170	1127	1244	1781	895	871	1845
Hospital Universitario 12 de Octubre (10)	334	576	627	570	484	536	690	1129	1006	1392	1637	1247	2084	1793	2579	2884
Hospital Sant Joan de Déu (16)	987	1409	937	991	1027	883	1521	1201	1654	1296	1515	1777	1356	1533	3168	2510
Hospital Universitari Vall d'Hebron (18)	1207	1435	1120	1279	1872	893	1219	928	1662	2214	2192	2956	2775	2633	4120	3448
Hospital Universitario Cruces (12)	1528	1825	1299	895	1288	727	1107	1677	1344	1804	1535	2357	2027	2399	2016	3431
Hospital Regional Universitario de Málaga (12)	1557	1569	2073	1679	1197	1702	1730	1703	1202	1364	1603	1972	1999	1908	3379	3382
Hospital Universitario Virgen del Rocío (14)	2119	1941	1847	2229	1320	1531	1460	1642	1261	2407	2548	2307	1830	2570	3130	4253
Hospital Universitario Virgen de la Arrixaca (11)	1865	1004	1276	1878	1753	2023	1778	1850	2175	1263	1820	2334	3660	3721	2720	2889
Hospital Universitario Miguel Servet (12)	2929	2087	1462	1347	2047	1146	2389	1763	2696	2641	2664	3161	2844	2887	3726	3768
Rank of candidate choosing last spot	3818	3505	3471	3264	3046	3399	3458	3499	3667	4089	4529	4616	4812	5081	5308	5283
Offered pediatric residency spots	406	414	421	416	400	389	398	411	418	442	479	489	492	499	506	516

5 Career opportunities in private health care that, in the case of pediatrics, do not seem to significantly improve the working conditions offered by the public health care system.

In conclusion, we must identify and address the underlying causes of this trend in order to reverse it and restore the appeal of pediatrics as a specialty training option. If no measures are taken, there is a risk that spots in this specialty will be left unfilled in future application cycles.

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Declaration of competing interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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David Andina Martínez[a,*], Francesco Giuseppe Ecclesia[a], Jara Gaitero Tristan[a], Esther Fernández Mozo[b], Jose Antonio Alonso-Cadenas[a]

[a] *Servicio de Urgencias Pediátricas, Hospital Infantil Universitario Niño Jesús, Madrid, España, Fundación para la Investigación Biomédica del Hospital Infantil Universitario Niño Jesús, Madrid, Spain*
[b] *Servicio de Pediatría, Hospital Infantil Universitario Niño Jesús, Madrid, Spain*

* Corresponding author.
E-mail address: david.andina@salud.madrid.org (D. Andina Martínez).

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