

**Dr Francisco Sales Puccini's full response to the matters raised in our programme *Latin America Investigates – Colombia Under the Knife* is set out below. Al Jazeera has been obliged to redact his statement in places so as not to reveal confidential medical details he has sent us concerning his former patients. Al Jazeera has also been advised not to reproduce unsolicited photographs sent to it by Dr Sales showing one of the patients in question topless both before and after surgery and, in addition, has felt it necessary to redact passages in which he makes defamatory allegations concerning an individual which we have not been able to verify.**

Dear journalist

Answering to your concerns, allow me to make the following clarifications:

**1. This paragraph has been redacted so as to maintain the confidentiality of the medical details of one of Dr Sales's patients.**

2. Regarding my professional qualifications I will say that since 2006 "any surgical specialist who has training of competence in aesthetic surgery within the field of its specialty is approved to perform it", I attach the copies of resolutions 1441-2013 and 2003 of 2013 that are the one protecting the patients in question, but I point you towards the rules of the minister of health of Colombia 1443-2006 and 2680-2007 to see the historical background of the law. So I am qualified ever since my board in general cosmetic surgery in 2006 and I studied all this time to increase and deepen my knowledge until the Ministry of Education of Colombia legally validated me as a plastic surgeon. I clarify that I was competent enough by the time I reached the last leg of my studies in Brazil, and I left the country still competent but having validated my previous knowledge. Therefore I am not nor have I ever been a social risk, I have not done anything illegal in my academic education, as Lorena Beltran claims.

3. In regards to [name redacted] I am sending a summary of her clinical history with photos attached to this mail.

4. As to our process of validation before the Ministry of Education; the journalist Martha Soto spoke for 4 hours with our spokesman, representative and president of our association Dr. Oscar Sandoval and I think she was deeply informed on the subject. It's important to remember that the current Minister of Education, Dra. Gina Parodi, said, after studying our case several times, that our process was legal. Then as it is customary in our country (a country that is known for the false witnesses whom monopolies use to legally end labour, political or business competition), it was a hidden witness (they are generally fake) with a false story about the legality of our process and the minister had by law to send it to the prosecutor to investigate. That investigation is in a preliminary process of research that will surely confirm our innocence, but it is a practice used by our rivals to shed a bad light on our business.

5. Regarding the executive secretary of SCCPE, Dr Ernesto Barbosa and his comments, I say that besides being a plastic surgeon of his association (association or a private academic club which does not meet state functions in the ministry of health) I do not consider him an authority in secondary medical education. He is not a evaluator for the Ministry of Education , he is not a part of CONACES (the inter-sectoral commission of education of the Ministry of Education), he isn't even a graduate professor in his specialty and he clearly does not have the academic background or experience, much less the relevance or competence to talk about the legal framework of health education theme in Colombia, or let alone to affect a minister of education's decision to validate us, so I am surprised that you are taking him into account, given that his opinion is not worth much.

6. Dr Carlos Michaelis, the Brazilian plastic surgeon and member of a private academic club in Brazil of equal characteristics with the SCCPE of Colombia, has less relevance and competence to talk about what a Ministry of Education of a country that isn't his does, besides his being disrespectful to our sovereign country which is unacceptable, particularly coming from a private citizen.

7. What a shame to not agree on this with you in what the supposedly ex deputy minister of education alleged. She, as an administrative officer, said she had received clues that there were an irregularities and that she was going to investigate. But ... weeks later the minister went out to say that everything was legal. **[Editor's clarification: There is some confusion over exactly Dr Sales who is referring to in this paragraph. It is possible he is confusing Colombia's deputy prosecutor with its deputy minister of education]**

8. Regarding the journalist Luisa Montoya, who by the way we knew was a journalist due to her social networks profile, whom I allowed to come to my office to see what she wanted. She came to my consultation with the story of wanting to have a rhinoplasty. I will say, everything what I told her is true - one thing is the few complaints that in 25 years of practice I have received and a different thing is having those complaints turn into something bigger. The journalists led by the so-called victim of mine **[name redacted]**, have researched my past and the only thing they have found are the things you write in your letter. I have never lost a patient in the operating room, never has anyone died due to something I did directly in either of my medical specialties. **The passage that follows has been redacted.**

9. With Martha Soto we agreed on the phone to meet for coffee, to tell her about the truth of the matter very soon, when this issue is closed and we will show how **[name redacted]** has led prestigious media organisations like El Tiempo and yourself to error.

10. Like I mentioned above, it is standard in our country to investigate every complaint that reaches the administrative bodies like the Ministry, according to the topic - in this case the general prosecutor, which is not unusual. On the other hand, it is an opportunity to demonstrate our legality.

I thank you for the opportunity you have given me to respond to your concerns and I hope this information will be balanced as best as possible and that very soon we have the opportunity to participate in an interview in person when this is all over, so I can tell you about the reality in the Colombian education and the monopoly of the plastic surgery industry in the country.

Cordially:

Dr Francisco Sales Puccini

**Dr Sales also provided further material by way of addendum, including a statement from a beautician in his employment. However, Al Jazeera is unable to publish this further material as it again discloses confidential medical details concerning his patients.**