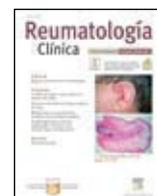




Reumatología Clínica

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Editorial

The great moment of Spanish Rheumatology

El gran momento de la reumatología española

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ARTICLE INFO

Available online April 2, 2009

The changes that have occurred in Spanish Rheumatology during the past years have been dizzying, reflecting on 3 areas: patient assistance, teaching, and research. In relation to the article published by Maese¹ in this number of *Reumatología Clínica*, I would like to reminisce on the evolution of research in rheumatology.

The landmark study by Cami et al² manifested the quantitative and qualitative progression that has taken place in Spain in the field of biomedicine between the years of 1990 and 1993. Spain was situated in 6th place in the European Community, which corresponded to 6.1% of the scientific production of the European Community and 1.8% of the world's scientific production. In the abovementioned period of time, 21 434 scientific documents were published (67% of the original), with Madrid and Cataluña being the overall largest scientific producers. In this article, the authors echoed the progression of rheumatology (229 documents, 33% of them letters). Afterward, in the analysis of the period between 1996 and 2004, the increase of documents in the biomedical field was 8% and the increase of international citations was 20%. The authors remarked on the asymmetry of scientific production in Spain, polarized between Madrid and Barcelona.³

However, not everything is rosy for Spanish rheumatology, because not every participation in a congress transcends.⁴ In this sense, a study pointed out the fact that only 20% of abstracts submitted to meetings have an ulterior impact through publication. What is then the role of these communications which remain in scientific limbo? They occasionally serve to justify attending a meeting, be it before an institutional panel or one's own team. Not communicating the research one does not serve the scientific community and oneself. This data is similar to that of the rest of Europe but far from

what happens in England, where the percentages are greater and reach 40%. This probably reflects a more challenging professional and university structure where the lack of publication leads to less funding and no contract renewal.

A detailed reading of the database in search of articles published by Spaniard authors on rheumatology manifests that publications from some centers in rheumatology journals with an impact factor correspond, on occasion, to specialties which are not related to rheumatology and with which our specialty healthily competes. In other words, elevated numbers of citations and articles in bibliometric indexes on rheumatology occasionally correspond to authors from other areas. The study by Maese discriminates this fact and delves into exactly the number of papers published by rheumatologists. In addition, it is one of the few searches where documents published in journals dedicated to metabolic bone diseases are considered, an arduous work indeed.

The geographic diversity of the publications is a motive of satisfaction. Madrid and Barcelona are the 2 cities with the largest populations and a larger number of rheumatologists. In absolute numbers, they concentrate the largest scientific activity in the field of rheumatology. It is interesting to observe that there are communities (as is the case of Galicia) that even in absolute numbers have a remarkable productivity. And if we take into account the relationship of the population with the scientific production, other communities can be included into this elite group, such as Cantabria. The number of international collaborations is also on the rise, something that testifies to the quality of the scientific publications and is important to consider.

It must be emphasized that scientific health research is contemplated in the political agenda, as shown by the investment for the creation of research centers. The numbers would probably improve if the obsolete structures of the ankylosed Universidad Española would give way to young researchers and would leave behind its obvious infighting and mediocrity. In this sense, the creation of a

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Table
Future of Research in Rheumatology: six proposals for the next millennium

- Creation and consolidation of research units in public hospitals
- Balancing teaching, research, and assistance
- Collaboration between researchers and centers
- Stimulating and facilitating the pathway of young researchers
- Creation and consolidation of scholarships to visit foreign centers (short stays, sabbaticals)
- Biomedical research is contemplated in the political agenda....Let's make ourselves noticed!

National Agency for the Evaluation of Quality and Credentials (Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación [ANECA]) is a piece of good news, although it is far from improving a structure located in the scientific rear guard.

The Spanish Society of Rheumatology (Sociedad Española de Reumatología [SER]) is aware of the future challenges. The creation of the research unit is an important step. Its stability, its power for creating and its scientific independence must continue. In addition, the ambitious DIB–SER plan can stimulate the formation of scientists and help in the creation of research laboratories. Continuing on this path is very important. A proposal for the future can be seen in Table.

Lastly, it must be pointed out that these excellent numbers are the result of a determined number of rheumatologists dedicated to basic research in rheumatology. However, when analyzing what has been published by Spanish authors we can see the importance of clinical and epidemiological research. All of this is possible thanks to common rheumatologists who dedicate part of their time to patient assistance and who, in many cases, invest time in the design of quality clinical research that is later published in prestigious journals. The balance between clinical and basic research is important for the progress of rheumatology.

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