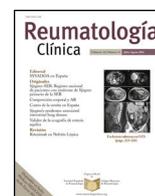




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Letter to the Editor

Reumataxi: An experience of solidarity in times of COVID-19[☆]



Reumataxi: una experiencia solidaria en tiempos de COVID-19

Dear Editor,

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused important changes at the healthcare level in Spanish hospitals. Most human resources have been dedicated to the care of COVID-19 patients.¹ This has meant that specialists, including rheumatologists, have had to take on the care of these patients. This reorganization has imposed 8 and 12-h work shifts. In addition, there is a shortage of public transport and shift changes at inconvenient times, creating travel problems for colleagues who do not have their own vehicles. Many of our colleagues have had to enter or leave their workplace late at night. Some do not have individual transport and have been forced to use public transport, which is scarce and runs at inconvenient times, causing discomfort and anxiety which add to the build-up of fatigue and stress.

To mitigate these adversities as much as possible, in the rheumatology department of Barcelona's Hospital Universitario del Mar, we have established a transport system for rheumatologists who must attend the work centre. Three volunteers from the department itself (JBR, PBR and JLO), taken off direct care of COVID patients for various reasons, and with their own vehicles have offered to drive their colleagues to work and collect them from their homes and/or vice versa. This operates via a WhatsApp[®] chat specific to the rheumatology department where the "Reumataxi" driver on duty sends a message each day to inform that he/she is on duty. The colleagues who need the service make it clear and internally (WhatsApp[®] or by phone) agree on the place and time for collection. The service has been running from March 21st until today. With a high level of satisfaction of both its users and the "Reumataxi drivers". There has been approximately one service a day, the most in demand being the one at 23 h. The service is provided in the vehicle of the "Reumataxi" driver, in most cases with only one passenger in the back of the vehicle, protected by face masks and gloves.

We want to tell the rheumatologist community about this initiative as it is, in our humble opinion, a supportive and original way of mitigating these times of crisis and the problems that this new situation is causing.

Antiviral, anti-malarial and biological drugs will help us to contain this pandemic whose definitive solution will necessarily come in the form of a vaccine. In the meantime, the best therapy in times of cholera, to quote Gabriel García Márquez, is love - or affection and solidarity, which amount to the same thing. Take note of the recipe against COVID: solidarity and empathy in equal parts. And the "Reumataxi"? "Reumataxi" as many as it'll take, it wasn't that difficult!

Reference

1. World Health Organization. Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19): Situationreport- 51. Geneva: World Health Organization; March 2020 [revised March 2020; consulted 14 April 2020]. Available from: <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200311-sitrep-51-covid-19.pdf>.

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