

EDITORIAL

The Spanish Journal of Prison Health, a meeting point for professionals: 20 years later

Twenty years ago, in November 1998, the Spanish Journal of Prison Health (RESP in Spanish) published its first issue. The Editorial was then entitled "*The Spanish Journal of Prison Health, a meeting point for professionals*" and it described the clinical and epidemiological situation of the imprisoned population, it recommended the coordination of activities and programs aimed at improving healthcare among these individuals and it called for the creation of a sole public health network which would prevent the isolation of correctional healthcare in our country. Moreover, the SESP (Spanish Society of Prison Healthcare) founded scarcely one year before that, announced that it had decided, among other measures aimed at improving healthcare in prisons, to create a common space for professionals and assume the edition, publication and distribution of the RESP, which thereby presented its first issue¹. That historical Editorial was signed by José Manuel Arroyo and Andrés Marco, the main promoters and later Directors of the Journal and other 15 professionals included in the "Drafting Committee". Five of them (almost 30%) still form part of what we know today as the Editorial Board, with further incorporations throughout the years. To those who were, but are no longer today, whatever the reason, we would like to sincerely acknowledge their work and effort through these lines.

As Rafael Ruíz described years later in another Editorial of the RESP², "the origin of a scientific journal always faces the need that a professional-scientific sector has at some point of a tool to socially structure and institutionalize the discipline that it represents". We believe that was an evident need back then and actually some events such as the creation of SESP, its first Congress in Barcelona in 1998 or the launch of RESP are relevant examples of the concern among correctional healthcare professionals in Spain.

As the famous tango by Carlos Gardel says: "*que la vida es un soplo y que veinte años no es nada*" life goes by and twenty years is nothing and certainly if you look back, the launch of RESP seems so recent. However, throughout these years the journal was born, it has developed and faced important profes-

sional challenges. To begin with, and specially to consolidate itself as a biomedical journal RESP had to prove its professional competence before the national and international scientific community and keep up to the thoroughness of its editorial process (formality, punctuality, reliability, rigour, scientific validity and ethical commitment) publicly committed to the editorial policy³. Furthermore, to promote its development and productivity, the Editorial Board has needed to redefine its goals and progressively improve other relevant aspects. Among these, its improved dissemination through the bilingual electronic version (English-Spanish)⁴, its influence and penetration of potential readers and collaborators (currently there are approximately 40.000 visitors/month to the website⁵ from different countries) and its visibility (highlighted by its admission in the SCIELO library⁶ and its retroactive indexation in Medline⁷ -the greatest and most prestigious biomedical database- since 2007). In this way, and as an example of this being a permanent ongoing process, some months ago the Journal had to pass the assessment procedure of PubMed Central (PMC). We believe that fulfilling the requirements and keeping up with Medline standards is the best acknowledgement to our scientific full age.

We'd like to express through these lines the satisfaction for the already covered ground, yet we also want to publicly declare that we are aware that there is still much left to do. Probably, for the RESP to achieve the prestige that both the Editorial Board and the Directive Board of SESP long for, prison healthcare would need to prove further research capability and improved productivity quality as well as our Journal being the main dissemination tool chosen by national and international correctional investigators. The termination of the restrictive policies that govern the field of Spanish correctional research, unheard of in the 21st Century, would certainly help this matter. As a first step, it would be advisable that both institutions and professionals unconvinced of the need for research would become aware of the usefulness and benefit of this practice- whose main aim is to improve the health condition of the population. In fact, inves-

tigation should be a responsibility of all healthcare professionals, regardless academic qualifications, hierarchical rank or professional activity since all should become involved in the decision-making processes regarding the promotion of health, the prevention of disease and the provision of the best healthcare assistance⁸. Correctional facilities can not and should not be left aside of this investigation capacity and it should further be promoted and implemented since it directly entails an improved healthcare when appropriately designed methodologically⁹. Thus, the limitations or restrictions to this activity should only take place due to ethical issues or a lack of rigour or scientific validity. However, the investigation capacity in certain settings, such as the correctional, have often been conditioned by political or administrative shifts or personal decisions, mostly with little or no grounds for doing so. This reality should be changed as soon as possible. On the other hand, it would also be advisable that the effect and impact factor of the publications of RESP would be improved in the short term. This is a main aim for the Editorial Board who is entirely committed to devote greater efforts.

Last, let us insist once more, in our obligation as healthcare professionals to be aware of the health issues, look for potential solutions and submit these to analysis and criticism through their dissemination in common scientific channels. That was essentially the main objective of the origin of RESP: a meeting point and to serve as – mainly and exclusively- a vehicle of information, transmission, debate and scientific criticism. And here we are -modestly yet proudly- twenty years later.

Editorial Board of Rev Esp Sanid Penit

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