

Revista Colombiana de Gastroenterología

30 years of continuous progress

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In February 1985, as the recently elected president of the Colombian Association of Gastroenterology, I proposed to Germán Liévano, who was the editor elected in the assembly for the book *Selected Topics in Gastroenterology*, that we launch a periodical for our specialty. Scientific updates were very precarious since the book was published every two years which meant two years of delay after the convention in which the articles were obtained. This was our traditional book which was a record of what was discussed in our scientific meeting but for which we had never been able to provide an update tool. The Board discussed the convenience of launching a magazine and its relation to the book in question. It concluded that there was no reason for there to be competition between the book and the magazine if the methodology of each was properly handled.

With this criterion, the Board approved a search for financial sponsorship to launch the publication. For the first phase we obtained the great support and interest of Guillermo Ortiz and Jaime Alberto Naranjo who were executives of Abbott Laboratories. They agreed to be responsible for editing the first year's issues of the magazine and providing us with the scientific material while we reserved advertising pages exclusively for their products. If, at the end of that first year, we felt able to continue on our own, they would hand over the management of the magazine but keep the back covers for their advertising for an additional year, but we would be free to sell ads on the inside pages to other companies. After that time, Abbott would disassociate itself entirely from publication of the magazine.

This agreement seemed fair to us because the association did not have the economic capacity and expertise for this effort, but if we were able to learn, to create sufficient expectations among potential sponsors to make the quarterly feasible, and if we could obtain enough quality articles from among the members of the association to publish in a timely fashion, we thought it just might be possible.

It looked easy, but learning was harder, especially in that era in which technology was far behind today. No computers were used, articles were written on typewriters. Then they had to be taken to the printer together with handmade graphs and illustrations. Color images were paid for by the authors, given their high cost. There were no clear rules about publication or review of articles. The Colombian experience was based on two journals. One was about obstetrics and gynecology, the other, the oldest, was *Acta Medica Colombiana* which was only ten years older than us. Its editors helped us a lot at the start this adventure. At the end of the day it would have been unforgivable if our Association which was one of the oldest in Colombia, had not launched this project into the future.

This challenge was assumed by all the members of the association as well as those of our sister associations of the time in endoscopy and coloproctology. Later on the hepa-

tology association joined in, too. This attitude enriched our pages with studies ranging from pure research through clinical and surgical technique, progress in diagnoses and endoscopic therapy, case reports, updates, systematic reviews, history, opinion, bioethics, publication of consensus and abstracts and on to memoirs of our congresses.

The first issue contained a historical article by Dr. Tomas Quevedo about the precursors of gastroenterology in Colombia, two original studies and three case presentations. At first we had a hard time obtaining enough items in time to meet the magazine's publication deadlines which is fundamental for inspiring confidence. Nevertheless, with the help of the Editorial Committee and all of the gastroenterologists, we were able to meet the goal of the first year and make the magazine independent. Since then, our success has grown as the number and quality of contributions has increased, and as support from the pharmaceutical industry has proven sufficient to keep the enterprise afloat.

At the start of the second year of publication, I took over as Editor of the magazine. I continued until 1995 when I was replaced by Carlos Serrano. From the beginning we began to publish contributions from international authors from Europe and elsewhere in Latin America. These were not only updates, but original works. We maintained the image of the magazine for 15 years during which time we improved the quality of its paper and printing. Beginning in 1989, it was recommended that we follow the Vancouver Minimum Requirements for Biomedical Publications. This subsequently became mandatory, and we began peer reviews from 2000. These changes were made thanks to the work of the editors, Alberto Rodriguez

and Fernando Sierra. They led to the creation of stronger and larger editorial boards in which the four related associations participate. We were able to put the publication date into the magazine's methodology and to have the magazine included in the data bases of various indexes within Colombian and internationally. Increasingly we have been included in higher rated indexes reaching equality with the most important magazines in our specialty in the world. The English version of the magazine has raised its rates of consultation and citation. The quantity and quality of opinions in letters to the Editor section attest to the vitality of publication.

The cover was modernized and the content improved with contributions from the following editors: Luis Alejandro Orozco, Oscar Beltrán, Mario Humberto Rey, Luis Fernando Pineda, Romulus Dario Vargas, John Ospina and the current tireless editor, Jaime Alvarado. In addition to maintaining the magazine's scientific level, Jaime Alvarado has structured the editorial and scientific committees in accordance with current regulations to maintain the A2 classification in Publindex Colciencias and has achieved inclusion in international databases including Lilacs, Scielo, Ebsco Publishing and Redalyc.

The Colombian Review of Gastroenterology is a source of pride for all members of the Colombian Association of Gastroenterology. It can demonstrate that after 30 years of continuous work, with the collaboration of all, that a medium high quality specialized medical publication can be maintained and developed in Latin America while we have also been able to continue publishing *Selected Topics in Gastroenterology* and many other publications from our societies.