

Special Article

Situational study of seven Latin-American pulmonology journals*

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Abstract

Objective: To characterize the situation of pulmonology journals published in Latin America. **Methods:** A survey was conducted in a meeting sponsored by the Latin American Thoracic Society. Each journal editor presented a report and answered a questionnaire. **Results:** Improving information acquisition is the main motivation for pulmonology societies to edit their own journals, whereas disseminating medical knowledge and reporting experiences are the main motivations for authors to submit papers. The most common failing in the manuscripts submitted is poor compliance with the journal guidelines. Improving author-editor-reviewer relationships would be the best strategy for improving the quality of manuscripts. Suggestions for improving Latin American journals included the following: promoting professionalism in editorial tasks; encouraging manuscript reviewers to be more meticulous; and embracing international norms for editing medical journals. The following major problems were reported: a lack of regular, appropriate periodicity of issues; a shortage of original papers that are considered 'milestones' in the specialty; a low rejection rate for submitted papers; a high turnover of editors. **Conclusion:** Based on our findings, we can make the following recommendations: although many journals are available in electronic form, they should also be maintained in print form; each journal should divulge its subscription fee, even if it is included in the annual society membership dues; although each Latin American country might decide to publish its own pulmonology journal, the feasibility of publishing a multinational Latin American pulmonology journal should be explored.

Keywords: Periodicals; Manuscripts; Latin America; Respiratory tract diseases.

1. Editor of the *Revista Chilena de Enfermedades Respiratorias* (Chilean Journal of Respiratory Tract Diseases).
2. Secretary of the *Asociación Latinoamericana de Tórax* (ALAT, Latin American Thoracic Society).
3. Editor of *Enfermedades del Tórax* (Thoracic Diseases).
4. Editor of the *Jornal Brasileiro de Pneumologia* (Brazilian Journal of Pulmonology).
5. Editor of the *Revista Colombiana de Neumología* (Colombian Journal of Pulmonology).
6. Editor of the *Revista Argentina de Medicina Respiratoria* (Argentinean Journal of Respiratory Medicine).
7. Editor of the *Revista Mexicana de Neumología y Cirugía de Tórax* (Mexican Journal of Pulmonology and Thoracic Surgery).
8. President of the *Asociación Latinoamericana de Tórax* (ALAT, Latin American Thoracic Society).
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In order to analyze the current status of journals dealing with respiratory tract diseases and published in Latin America, the editors of seven such journals (Table 1) were summoned to a meeting organized by the *Asociación Latinoamericana de Tórax* (ALAT, Latin American Thoracic Society) in Lima, Peru, on February 4, 2007. All of the journal editors presented reports on the editorial status of their respective journals (Table 2). The reports presented by the editors were complemented by the responses to a survey on how to increase the number and quality of the manuscripts published. According to the editors, improving information acquisition is the main motivation for national respiratory medicine societies to edit their own journals. In addition, they consider disseminating medical knowledge and reporting experiences to be the main motivations for authors to publish manuscripts. However, the most common failing in the manuscripts submitted is poor compliance with the journal guidelines and requirements. The strategy most commonly used by editors to improve the quality of manuscripts is improving author-editor-reviewer relationships. Of the seven editors, three reported a decrease in the number of original manuscripts submitted to their journals. This decrease was mainly attributed to increasing pressure to publish in journals with the highest impact factor. The sugges-

tions for improving Latin American journals dealing with respiratory tract diseases can be summarized as follows: to increase the level of professionalism in the editorial aspects; to encourage manuscript reviewers to be more detail-oriented; and to strictly adhere to international norms for editing medical journals.⁽¹⁾

Conclusions and recommendations

We believe that the seven journals evaluated constitute a highly representative sample in terms of the processes involved in the publishing of pulmonology journals, which are official organs of national and regional respiratory medicine societies in Latin America. In addition, according to an online (Internet) bibliographic search,⁽²⁾ such journals account for 77.77% of the new pulmonology journals published in Latin America.

In this context, it is important to highlight that most of the Latin American journals dealing with respiratory tract diseases present the problems described herein. We take the liberty of making some recommendations to solve, or at least to prevent the spread and worsening of, such problems.

Principal problems:

1. A lack of periodicity in the publication of issues.
It is necessary that issues be published regularly

Table 1 - Editors, Latin American pulmonology journals, and the national/international societies that they represent.

Editor	Journal	Society
Jorge O. Cáneva*	<i>Revista Argentina de Medicina Respiratoria</i> (Argentinean Journal of Respiratory Medicine)	Argentinean Society of Respiratory Medicine
José Antonio Baddini Martínez	<i>Jornal Brasileiro de Pneumologia</i> (Brazilian Journal of Pulmonology)**	Brazilian Thoracic Society
Mary Bermúdez Gómez	<i>Revista Colombiana de Neumología</i> (Colombian Journal of Pulmonology)	Colombian Society of Pulmonology and Thoracic Surgery
Manuel J. Oyarzún Gómez	<i>Revista Chilena de Enfermedades Respiratorias</i> (Chilean Journal of Respiratory Tract Diseases)	Chilean Society of Respiratory Tract Diseases
Jaime E. Morales Blanhir	<i>Revista Mexicana de Neumología y Cirugía de Tórax</i> (Mexican Journal of Pulmonology and Thoracic Surgery)	Mexican Society of Pulmonology and Thoracic Surgery
Adalberto M. Agüero Fernández	<i>Enfermedades del Tórax</i> (Thoracic Diseases)	Peruvian Society of Pulmonology
Néstor Ruiz Jiménez	<i>Medicina Broncopulmonar</i> (Bronchopulmonary Medicine)	Central American and Caribbean Federation of Pulmonology and Thoracic Surgery

*President of the Argentinean Society of Respiratory Medicine. Since the journal editor position was open to applicants at the time, the president of the Society represented the editor; **The Brazilian Journal of Pulmonology is published in English and Portuguese; the remaining journals are published in Spanish, with titles and abstracts in English.

Table 2 – Characteristics of the seven Latin American pulmonology journals.

Title	Periodicity	Pressings per issue	Nº of pages	Website	International Indexing***
<i>Revista Argentina de Medicina Respiratoria</i> (Argentinean Journal of Respiratory Medicine)	Quarterly*	1200	30	www.aamr.org.ar/cms/	
<i>Jornal Brasileiro de Pneumologia</i> (Brazilian Journal of Pulmonology)	Bimonthly	3800	120	www.jornaldepneumologia.com.br	MEDLINE SciELO LILACS Latindex
<i>Revista Colombiana de Neumología</i> (Colombian Journal of Pulmonology)	Quarterly	1000	30	www.col.ops-oms.org/iah/portal.htm	SciELO LILACS Latindex
<i>Revista Chilena de Enfermedades Respiratorias</i> (Chilean Journal of Respiratory Tract Diseases)	Quarterly	700	70	www.serchile.cl	SciELO LILACS Latindex
<i>Revista Mexicana de Neumología y Cirugía de Tórax</i> (Mexican Journal of Pulmonology and Thoracic Surgery)	Quarterly	1000	50	www.smnyct.org.mx www.medigraphic.com	Latindex
<i>Enfermedades del Tórax</i> (Thoracic Diseases)	Semestral*	1000	60	http://sisbib.unmsm.edu.pe/BVrevistas/enfermedades_torax/enf_torax.htm	Latindex
<i>Medicina Broncopulmonar</i> (Bronchopulmonary Medicine)	Annual**	1000			

*Irregular frequency according to the editors; **Published annually in connection with the congress organized by the Central American and Caribbean Federation of Pulmonology and Thoracic Surgery; ***Electronic databases: MEDLINE = Index Medicus online; SciELO = Scientific Electronic Library Online; LILACS = *Literatura Latinoamericana y del Caribe en Ciencias de la Salud* (Latin American and Caribbean Health Science Literature); Latindex: Índice de publicaciones científicas seriadas de América Latina, el Caribe, España y Portugal (Information System for the Scholarly Journals of Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain and Portugal); Note: This article is based on the following publication: Oyarzún M: Situación editorial de las revistas latinoamericanas de enfermedades respiratorias. *Rev Chil Enf Respir* 2007, 23 (in press). It will be simultaneously published in five Latin American journals of respiratory diseases: the *Revista Argentina de Medicina Respiratoria* (Argentinean Journal of Respiratory Medicine), the *Jornal Brasileiro de Pneumologia* (Brazilian Journal of Pulmonology), the *Revista Colombiana de Neumología* (Colombian Journal of Pulmonology), the *Revista Mexicana de Neumología y Cirugía de Tórax* (Mexican Journal of Pulmonology and Thoracic Surgery), and the *Peruvian journal Enfermedades del Tórax* (Thoracic Diseases).

(at least every three months). Consensuses and free communications in congresses should be excluded from regular issues and be published as supplements.

2. A shortage of original papers that have a real impact on current practice in the field. A total of two or three such articles should be published per year if the journal is to be indexed for major international databases. Articles that are rewritten from original articles published by the same authors in other journals, as well as review articles (especially review articles

written by individuals who have no experience in the subject), have no real relevance.⁽³⁾

3. In general, the rejection rate for original papers is low (5–39%), which would indicate that most such journals have limited competence in selecting articles of competitive quality and universal appeal.
4. Most of the journals have a high turnover of editors, usually every year, which hinders proper management and compliance with international editing guidelines. This could, in part, explain the small number of Latin American pulmonology journals indexed for major inter-

national databases, such as SciELO, MEDLINE, and the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI). We consider it essential that the Editorial Board have autonomy and be not subject to the periodic changes in the directives of the sponsoring societies. It is equally important that each national or regional society ensure the funding to publish the journal, which is its official organ.

Recommendations:

1. Most of the journals evaluated can be accessed electronically either via the web page of the national or regional society that they represent or via the database for which they are indexed. However, we consider it essential that the journal be maintained in print form for storage purposes since to the durability of electronic forms is an unknown factor.⁽³⁾
2. We recommend that each journal divulge its subscription fee, even if it is included in the annual society membership dues. If the journal seems to be supplied free of charge, it will be belittled by its readers since it is a Latin American idiosyncrasy to undervalue anything that is free.
3. We consider it perfectly legitimate that each national or regional pulmonology society in Latin America aspires to have its own journal. However, before making this decision, its motivations should be carefully considered. If the objective is to contribute to the global knowledge in the field, the indexing for major international databases should be considered, and, to this end, the local society will have to have achieved a 'critical mass' of authors willing to publish in that journal. If that does not happen, it is preferable to publish a local journal that disseminates universal information rather than contributing to the fragmentation of the Latin American pulmonology journals that aspire to be indexed for major databases. Being indexed for these databases is becoming more difficult every year due to the significant increase in the number of high quality journals that are published worldwide.⁽⁵⁾

One proposal for achieving this aspiration is the creation of multinational medical journals in Latin America, which is an action that had already been delineated – in 1995 – for the Latin American scientific journals indexed for the ISI.⁽⁴⁾ In the specific

case of the field of respiratory tract diseases, the president of the ALAT analyzed, in a recent article, the advantages and disadvantages of developing a Latin American journal dealing with respiratory tract diseases.⁽²⁾

Despite the high prevalence of respiratory tract diseases worldwide, the journals related to respiratory health that are currently published in Latin America do not reflect the importance of respiratory tract diseases. A joint effort could result in a more effective means of communication.⁽⁶⁾

At the 2007 Editors' Meeting in Lima, it was agreed that a multinational committee comprising five editors or specialists would be created. This committee is currently composed of Drs. J. A. Baddini-Martínez; C. M. Luna, J. Olórtegui, M. Oyarzún, and R. Pérez-Padilla, who will prepare a preliminary plan for a Latin American journal. This plan will explore the feasibility of achieving this goal through the ALAT.

Note: In March of 2007, Dr. José Luis Olórtegui T. resigned his post as editor of *Enfermedades del Tórax* (Thoracic Diseases), the journal of the Peruvian Society of Pulmonology, and was replaced by Dr. Adalberto Agüero Fernández.

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