

ASSOBRAFIR and the scientific development of its specialty

A ASSOBRAFIR e o desenvolvimento científico da especialidade

Respiratory physical therapy was recognized and valued during the eighties due to its technical and scientific development. Over time, the professional practice in this field became more distinguished from the usual outpatient care offered in clinics and rehabilitation centers. Respiratory physical therapy became indispensable in hospitals, where it was progressively implemented in wards and intensive care units. The need for scientific discussion and a venue for dissemination of knowledge prompted the creation of the Núcleo de Estudos em Fisioterapia Respiratória (Respiratory Physical Therapy Study Center), under the direction of Carlos Alberto Caetano Azeredo. This center gathered professionals from several regions of Brazil and embodied the initial organization of Brazilian cardiorespiratory physical therapy. In 1983, with the intent of gathering professionals working within the specialty, Carlos Alberto Caetano Azeredo organized the 1st International Symposium of Respiratory Physical Therapy in Rio de Janeiro. Two thousand participants attended the symposium. In 1984, during the 2nd International Symposium of Respiratory Physical Therapy, it was evident that this national event should become itinerant. It also became necessary to create an organization with political and representative roles for the specialty.

During the 3rd International Symposium in Pernambuco on September 2nd 1985, the Sociedade Brasileira de Fisioterapia Respiratória – SOBRAFIR (Brazilian Society of Respiratory Physical Therapy) was created, and the International Symposium of Respiratory Physical Therapy was chosen as its most expressive scientific activity. Since then, the society has been under the administration of ten presidents. In 2006, due to judicial reasons, the organization changed its denomination to Association in place of Society, and became the Associação Brasileira de Fisioterapia Cardiorrespiratória e Fisioterapia em Terapia Intensiva - ASSOBRAFIR (Brazilian Association of Cardiorespiratory Physical Therapy and Intensive Care Physical Therapy).

The Association's board of directors is elected by the direct votes of all members every three years. Its head office is in São Paulo. Due to the continental proportions of the Brazilian territory and the wide range of its society, regional units were created to act directly with the members of each region and to disseminate the ideals of the Association. ASSOBRAFIR currently has nine regional offices: São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro, Paraná, Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, Pernambuco, Goiás and Bahia. It is the first Brazilian scientific society to award titles of Emeritus Members to professionals with 20 years of uninterrupted membership. Fulfilling its role of scientific society, ASSOBRAFIR confers two titles of specialist. In 1996, the first titles of Specialist in Respiratory Physical Therapy were accredited to professionals approved in a proficiency exam. This was a seminal moment, for the establishment of specialties in any profession is the recognition of the existence of differentiated knowledge and practice. This fact generated an expressive development of respiratory physical therapy in the country. It was believed that the designation of "respiratory physical therapy" would encompass all areas of practice in which the cardiorespiratory system was involved. However, because specialties are designated according to their field of action, it was recognized that the

practice of the intensive care physical therapist, although strongly related to respiratory physical therapy, needed proper designation. Therefore, this year, ASSOBRAFIR conferred the first titles of Specialist in Intensive Care Physical Therapy to strengthen the specialty.

The Association is evolving and fulfilling its primordial role, which is to gather professionals practicing in the field and promote the technological and scientific development of the specialty. Scientific organizations have an indispensable role in the development of a specialty and should not be mistaken for persons or names, or simply act as events promoters. Scientific events should have specific aims: to disseminate results of research related to the field and to encourage the scientific debate about the services provided. In this sense, ASSOBRAFIR fulfills its role intensively, as the number of submitted abstracts increases at each Symposium. This year, during the 14th Symposium in Recife, 675 scientific abstracts were submitted and 616 were selected: 500 scientific investigations presented as posters and 116 oral presentations. The recognition of this scientific activity is consolidated through the publication of its annals in an indexed journal of indisputable scientific quality. Since the 10th International Symposium of Respiratory Physical Therapy, abstracts have been published as a supplement of the Brazilian Journal of Physical Therapy.

For the current administration (2007-2009), one of the priorities is the continuing education of professionals from different areas of the country. This commitment became a reality with the creation of a distance-learning institute (EAD ASSOBRAFIR) that will encompass several topics of interest of the specialty and contribute to the technical and scientific development of physical therapists as well as the quality of procedures and guidelines used in respiratory physical therapy and in intensive care physical therapy throughout the country.

Another objective achieved in this administration was the fulfillment of a dream long cherished by members and professionals of the field: the launch of the Association's electronic journal. Its main objective is to provide specialized study material to lecturers, students and professionals.

This year, ASSOBRAFIR also fulfilled an important social role with the creation of the "Cardiorespiratory and Intensive Care Physical Therapist Week". The objective is to disseminate information about our practice to the general public. The activities began on the Association's anniversary, September 2nd, and several community projects were carried out by all regional divisions around the country in order to disseminate our specialty. Another important victory of this administration also took place in September of this year, during the annual conference of the European Respiratory Society (ERS) in Berlin, when ASSOBRAFIR was accredited by the ERS as the representative of Brazilian cardiorespiratory physical therapy and intensive care physical therapy. This is of great importance to Brazilian professionals, for although our cardiorespiratory and intensive care physical therapy is one of the most competent in the world, it still lacked international representation. With this accreditation, we will be able to disseminate our specialty and our research with effective participation of ASSOBRAFIR members in the scientific activities of ERS.

Considering the amount of available information, the constant renewal of scientific ideas and concepts, and the professional's lack of time for an adequate critical appraisal of all the evidence, ASSOBRAFIR aims to stimulate technical and scientific growth because it recognizes that conscientious, clear and adequate use of scientific evidence is crucial to professional practice. ASSOBRAFIR partners with other entities dedicated to promoting knowledge and the professional representation of physical therapists, thus endeavoring to make its required contribution as a society.

Prof. Dr. Sara Menezes

President-Director of ASSOBRAFIR

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