



Congresses and contagions. Pulmonologists as patients

Congresos y contagios. Neumólogos como pacientes

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*Onward, onward along this endless
road that is the great adventure of our
life, the march of humanity.
«The march of humanity».*
David Alfaro Siqueiros
(Figure 1)

Within the professional training of a physician, congresses are part of the actions to be taken to receive continuous education and updating.

In recent months, the COVID-19 pandemic led to the suspension of physical participation and the popularization of virtual assistance, which already existed but had not been exploited to its full potential. This type of modality allowed academic exchange and knowledge to continue with the necessary dissemination in the present respiratory emergency situation.

The control and containment of the aforementioned respiratory disease by means of new management, vaccines, public health, etc., have allowed medical congresses to offer again the hybrid situation (face-to-face/virtual), but emphasizing physical presence.

Our pneumological society had its last pre-pandemic face-to-face meeting in the city of Oaxaca in February 2020, in the so-called MasterClass, where participation is discreet compared to the National

Congress, then the first cases began in our country and the need to suspend the 2020 and 2021 meetings arises, as in the rest of the world.

In the current year 2022 the MasterClass meeting was held in the city of Cabo San Lucas with a great attendance, which was the ideal preamble for the National Congress that was scheduled to be held in the city of Monterrey last June, which was completed with great success and participation of the attendees.

The natural fear of the participants was the possibility of contagion due to being together with many colleagues for several days. The professionals questioned themselves about the need to assist or not to this event, asking themselves «is it right to attend?», «isn't it exactly what I have recommended to my patients not to be in crowded meetings?», «is it a responsible decision?», «I have been so careful!» adding all the situations that it entails such as having seen patients and/or family members hospitalized, getting complicated and dying.

Here the logical question would be: why are there medical congresses in person? The answer could be, because life goes on like science, medicine, and professionals are no strangers to it.

Before the scientific societies restarted activities personally, a large number of establishments such as cinemas, theaters, restaurants, schools, sports centers, entertainment centers, tourist hotels, etc., were already doing it. And why? Because the health authorities allowed it with the evaluation of the specialists in charge.

When meeting with foreign colleagues, especially those from North America and Europe, they comment that not wearing masks or having protective measures in their respective countries is the rule compared to what we have in our country.

The congress organizers recommended a test for SARS-CoV-2 virus prior to attending the event and the possibility of running laboratory studies at the course facilities.

It was mandatory to wear a mask in all activities, there was antibacterial gel at

the entrances to the site, a similar device was also provided in the registration bags and in the commercial area, besides the gifts for participants contained solutions of the same characteristics. Several questions could be asked here: what else could have been done? Could something better have been planned? There are probably always points for improvement, but we did what was necessary and recommended; so far, the number of infections does not exceed 5% of the total number of attendees.

It is worth mentioning that in the MasterClass held in Baja California Sur there was no significant number of COVID-19 case detection associated with the attendance; it can be argued that the number of participants was lower than in the National Congress, but it should be emphasized that it was held months prior to the conference in Monterrey, where the presence of the pandemic was still in action.

This year we have witnessed the fifth wave of this emerging situation in our nation, unfortunately it overlapped with the month of the national meeting, but fortunately there is no data on the severity

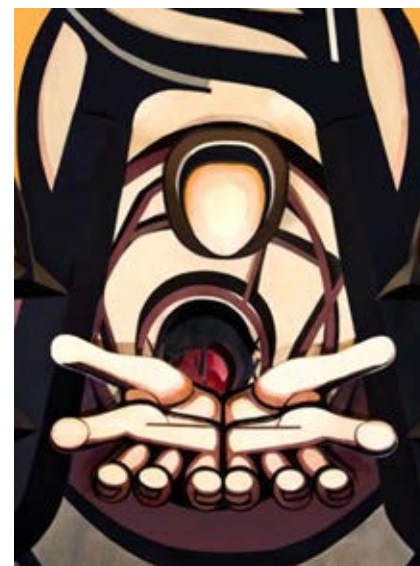


Figure 1: Mural «The march of humanity». David Alfaro Siqueiros. Available at: <https://www.pinterest.es/pin/473440979550239251/>

of infected patients who have required in-hospital care, being managed on an outpatient basis.

After two years, the respiratory health specialist had to restart his academic life at some point and the place was in Monterrey.

It is up to us as a society and professionals to follow up on all these

situations; in two years we will be 85 years old as a medical school, we have survived several pandemics, the «white plague», as pulmonary tuberculosis was called, was the origin of its formation.

We will move forward!

With everyone's participation and support, for the benefit of our patients.

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