

Twenty five years of the Spanish Journal of Prison Health

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Text received: 13/09/2023

Text accepted: 18/09/2023

A recent leader published in the Spanish Journal of Prison Health (RESP)¹ commemorated the first steps taken by a group of professionals (Gaspar Garrote, Vicente Martín and myself) to organise the first Conferences of Prison Health in Spain.

I participated in the first attempt, led by Gaspar Garrote in the early 90s, which did not bear fruit, and in the two subsequent events, which were a success: in Leon in 1993, as a Speaker², and in Barcelona in 1998, as Chair of the Organising Committee³.

This second Conference, which received no external support in the early stages, was backed up by the recently created Spanish Society of Prison Health (SESP) some months before the opening date, and so in historical terms it was the first Conference to be organised by the SESP.

A few months before the Barcelona Conference, I received a phone call from José Manuel Arroyo, who proposed that we should meet in Zaragoza. During this conversation, he invited me to form part of a project to create what would be the first Spanish biomedical journal on prison health. He also told me that he wanted the publication of the first edition to coincide with the Conference in Barcelona with the idea that the journal would be given “in situ” to the attendants.

José Manuel was - and I believe that this is a well-known and acknowledged fact - the real driving force behind the project; the person who led the creation of the RESP, who continued in the post of director and/or editor of the journal for more than eighteen years until 2016.

As planned, the first edition of the RESP was published in 1998 and was given by hand to the par-

ticipants of the Barcelona Conference. The Editorial Board sent two clear messages in the leader of the first edition: 1) the RESP would be the journal of scientific communication of the SESP, the recently created Spanish Society of Prison Health, which would take on responsibility for printing and distributing the journal; and 2) it was created to be a “meeting point” for prison and external healthcare professionals and function exclusively as a vehicle of scientific transmission⁴.

This first leader was written by José Manuel and myself, who would later be the directors and editors for many years, and by another fifteen professionals who formed part of the Editorial Board at that time. As a leader that commemorated 20 years of the RESP⁵ mentions, five persons - almost 30% - of the original group still participate in the Editorial Board, while other professionals have joined up to replace those who have left over these twenty five years.

The aims expressed in the first leader mentioned above were followed and expressed in an example of collaboration with other scientific societies in the International Tuberculosis Workshop held in 1999, where the RESP was given the task of publishing the presentations held at this event⁶. Just one year later, the RESP was recognised by the Spanish Health Sciences Bibliographical Index (IBECS), a body established as part of the Carlos III Health Institute to guarantee the quality of Spanish biomedical journals.

Since that first edition, the Editorial Board has not ceased in its efforts to study and evaluate initiatives that might help to increase the transmission and impact of the RESP. One such initiative, and an

important one, was the approval in 2005 of the bilingual publication (Spanish and English) of the contents of the RESP⁷.

Another part of its work to improve the quality of the journal, and one that I find truly remarkable, is the decision by the Editorial Board to submit the editorial work and its results to specialised external criticism in an effort to discover any deficits, potential limitation and options for improvement. An example of this is the request made to the Department of Information and Communication of the University of Granada to appraise and evaluate the journal, the results of which were published in the journal in the form of a leader or special article^{8,9}.

The changes made after the appraisals helped the RESP to pass the evaluations it had to undergo and that later led to it being indexed in the SCIELO¹⁰ and in the Medline database, regarded as the best biomedical bibliographical information system in the world¹¹.

Other remarkable developments have taken place since then. Examples include the elimination of the journal in paper, to be replaced by an exclusively online format, and most importantly, the option of accessing publications at no charge, which makes the RESP stand out from other conventional biomedical journals.

Taken together, all these improvements have led to a higher visibility, especially after the first ten years of publication, an increase in the number of consultations of the website and a growing number of manuscripts sent from outside Spain¹⁰, a phenomenon that has continued up to the present day¹².

Twenty five years have passed since those early days; a long time culminating in what is now our “silver anniversary” that has come about from persistence and constant effort.

We believe that in this period the RESP has positioned itself as a vehicle for scientific transmission to become a good journal and one of the best on pathologies in the prison setting. Its creation was a response – as mentioned on other occasions⁸ to the demand from a collective that was looking for an instrument that would socially and professionally articulate and institutionalise the discipline that it represented. That was its strength. And this strength has been further reinforced thanks to the efforts of the Editorial Board (its past and present members), the support of the SESP and the trust of the authors who have chosen the RESP to publish and transmit their research.

On this very happy anniversary, the only thing left to do is to give our deepest thanks to everyone who has made it possible for us to continue to be a “meeting point between professionals”.

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