



Milestones in Hepatology

Annals of hepatology: A milestone in the history of medicine in Mexico

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1. Introduction

Annals of Hepatology (AoH) is a milestone in the history of medicine in Mexico. This year, AoH ranked first among the scientific medical journals in Mexico with a Journal Citation Reports impact factor of 2.4 and ranked second quartile (Q2) in the category of medicine. It is the highest level obtained by any Mexican journal in scientific medicine and liver medicine in Latin America. This story is about how the "seed" of AoH was sown, allowing its birth, growth, and consolidation at the national and international levels.

2. The status of medicine and medical societies in Mexico: the early years

In the history of the creation and evolution of a medical journal, we must study in parallel the status of medicine over time, including the role of "the actors" (human resources), to understand how medical journals are launched, stagnated, discontinued, or consolidated. I witnessed the before and after of the paradigm shift towards scientific medicine, first in European medicine and later in American medicine throughout the XXth century's late '60s and '70s. Scientific or contemporary medicine incorporates the most updated scientific and technological knowledge into the medical career and medical specialties' academic curricula. This trend was also taken up in Mexico by integrating a curriculum containing a two-year block of basic medical sciences, two years of clinical sciences, and a one-year internship. This was the professional profile of the average medical student who then could continue with a clinical or surgical specialty. Later, between the mid-'70s and '80s, postgraduate master's degree and Ph. D. programs were offered mainly in Mexico City, in several research centers and academic universities.

The naissance of the medical specialties and respective societies gave way to numerous generations of "the actors" who then shaped the emerging medical journals. The growth of these societies increased the number of abstracts submitted to the annual meetings. Unfortunately, a great deal of them did not reach full journal publication in English or were published in Spanish; thus, limiting international peer-reviewed evaluations and visibility (low rates of citations). In perspective, if only 5 percent of all the abstracts presented at the meetings achieved publication, Mexico could have a solid international competence in scientific productivity.

To date, most national medical journals are far from reaching worldwide consolidation and indexation. Table 1 shows a brief list of national journals with scientometric data. Some journals remain stagnant or have been discontinued due to the lack of editorial strategies to compete internationally and to invest in professionalizing editorial management. Furthermore, we have experienced that while there are people genuinely dedicated, unfortunately, others have acted to make them disappear. Some colleagues have stressed that a key factor is the lack of financial resources for editorial processing. However, not few medical societies count on sound finances; instead, they lack an efficient editorial plan. Consequently, constant changes within the medical societies' board of directors or the administrative authorities within the higher education institutions disrupt the continuity of the respective editorial policies and committees. In summary, the situation points to the absence of robust scientific culture and a strategic intermediate and long-term editorial program in both the medical societies and academic universities that need to be adequately addressed.

However, despite the historical conditions described above, scientific medical journals in Mexico have endeavored due to the initiative and enthusiasm of a person or a group of academic medical doctors. What occurred in the case of AoH is narrated in the following sections.

A milestone is an event or event that serves as a point of reference.

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Table 1
2020 and 2021 impact factor of national scientific journals in medicine.

Title (ISSN)	Impact Factor/Journal Citation Report		Scimago Journal Ranking		h-Index	
	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021
Annals of Hepatology (1665–2681)	2.125	2.4	0.640	0.71	50	53
Archives of Medical Research (0188–4409)	2.093	2.235	0.750	0.6	76	80
Salud Publica de México (1606–7916)	1.647	2.028	0.620	0.67	52	54
Revista de Investigación Clínica (0034–8376)	1.192	1.513	0.480	0.417	27	25
Gaceta Médica de México (0016–3813)	–	–	0.170	0.18	20	21
Salud Mental (0185–3325)	–	–	0.160	0.16	23	24
Cirugía y Cirujanos (0009–7411)	–	0.354	0.151	0.161	15	14

3. The actors involved in the development of hepatology in Mexico

Initially, the Mexican scientific community interested in liver medicine attended every year the meetings of the American Association for the Study of Liver Disease (AASLD) held in Chicago, Illinois. This international meeting was traditionally organized in the same city, where Dr. Hanns Popper and Dr. Sheila Sherlock met for the first time with a small group of liver scholars to be updated on the advances in liver studies. Hanns Popper was a pathologist, so Dr. Marcos Rojkind, a student of Dr. Ruy Pérez Tamayo, a well-known pathologist in Mexico, would also attend these meetings to share his research studies in liver cirrhosis. The small group of scholars in hepatology grew to such an extent that the number of participants became so large that it forced the organizers to move their venue each year.

In 1985, Dr. Marco Rojkind (past president AMH, 1985–1986) organized in Oaxtepec, Morelos, the first Hispano Workshop in Hepatology, gathering Spanish-speaking clinicians and researchers from the American and European continents. At that meeting, emphasis was given to continue these meetings and share research in hepatology. The idea of a Mexican Association of Hepatology (AMH, *Asociación Mexicana de Hepatología*) was then taken up, starting with a course in hepatology annexed to the National Gastroenterology Week organized yearly by the Mexican Association of Gastroenterology (AMG, *Asociación Mexicana de Gastroenterología*). This course was led by the Gastroenterology Department's medical staff ascribed to the "Salvador Zubirán" National Institute of Nutrition. Among them were the very respected Dr. José de Jesús Villalobos, and Dr. Luis Guevara, a gastroenterologist and hepatologist, who very strongly promoted the development of hepatology by encouraging young specialists to study in Europe and the United States. Upon returning to Mexico, they became members of the Department, such as Dr. Enrique Wolpert, Dr. David Kershenovich, Dr. Linda Muñoz, and Dr. Misael Uribe. They were later joined by Dr. Guadalupe García Tsao, Dr. Mauricio Lisker, and Dr. Arturo Panduro (Fig. 1).

On the other hand, the meetings of the Latin American Association for the Study of the Liver (ALEH, *Asociación Latinoamericana para el Estudio del Hígado*) were held in conjunction with the AMH during the presidency of a Mexican doctor. It then occurred that ALEH's President, Dr. Misael Uribe (1998–2000), knowing the need for a journal in the English language represented by the Latin American region, suggested the creation of a medical journal in hepatology due to a large number of research papers coming from many countries of the American continent.

4. The story of Annals of Hepatology

2002: birth of Annals of Hepatology

The perseverance of Dr. Misael Uribe to provide a hepatology journal in Mexico and Latin America, the enthusiasm of past President Dr. Nahum Mendez (2001–2002) (currently, AoH's Founding

Editor), and a community of national, Latin American, and international hepatologists defined the beginning of this new initiative financed and supported by the Medica Sur Clinical Foundation. AoH became the official journal of the AMH, ALEH, and later the Canadian Association of the Study of the Liver (CASL). Under this environment of advancements in hepatology in Mexico, the conditions for AoH's birth were finally created.

2004: AMH's 1st National Congress of Hepatology

We owe Dr. Juan Ramón Aguilar (past President AMH 1995–1996) the official installment of the international courses in the field. On June 6–8, 1996, he held the 1st International Course in Hepatology at the Military School of Medicine in Mexico City, an activity that would subsequently continue as part of the academic events of the AMH.

Thus, as the interest flourished, a more sizable number of works related to liver medicine was notable, and updated scientific information appeared. In 2004, former President Dr. Arturo Panduro (2003–2004) organized the 1st National Congress of Hepatology in Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco. Since then, the AMH and its successive academic meetings have been held independently from the AMG. The consolidation of hepatology in Mexico was now installed: the number of specialists and researchers interested in the field had grown, AoH had been born, and the AMH had its own setting.

2002 to 2021: growth and consolidation of Annals of Hepatology:

Since its inception, AoH has documented its progress step by step in the Editorials section. Dr. Andres T. Blei (Editor-in-Chief, HEPATOLOGY) wrote a welcome message in the first volume launched in 2002 to point out the need for journals such as AoH given HEPATOLOGY's tremendous demand [1]. AoH begins publishing original articles and reviews per quarter, with a national and international editorial board of enthusiastic hepatologists dedicated to clinical and basic research. Two years later, the journal is indexed by PubMed, simultaneously the number of liver scholars keeps growing in Mexico, and the 1st National Congress of Hepatology of the AMH is organized in Puerto Vallarta.

In 2007, AoH was included in the scientometric and bibliographic database "Institute of Scientific Information" (ISI), and from 2007 to 2014, it was recognized as the nation's best scientific journal by the National Council of Science and Technology (CONACYT-MEXICO). In 2009, for the first time, it reached an impact factor of 1.67 that rose to 2.19 in 2013.

In 2011, AoH started using an electronic online submission platform, and in 2012, it began launching bi-monthly publications with six issues per year to accommodate the higher number of articles submitted for peer-review and publication. In 2015, articles were designated a Digital Online Identifier (DOI) to adapt to the international standards established by other publishing platforms worldwide.

In 2016, an Associate Editors' Board meeting was held in Boston, where new strategies were established to promote higher quality standards of the research published in AoH (Fig. 2). Likewise, the alliance with the main hepatology medical societies of the continent



Fig. 1. Staff members of the Gastroenterology Department, Salvador Zubirán, National Institute of Nutrition (circa 1990). Upper line from left to right: Dr. Miguel Angel Valdovinos, Dr. Misael Uribe, Dr. Jose de Jesus Villalobos, Dr. David Kershenovich, Dr. Florencia Vargas.[†] Lower line from left to right: Dr. Mauricio Lisker, Dr. Guadalupe Garcia Tsao, Dr. Luis Uscanga, Dr. Arturo Panduro. (Photo courtesy of Dr. Arturo Panduro).

(CASL, ALEH, AMH) is strengthened by confirming their affiliation and representation by AoH.

2018: the new stage of *Annals of Hepatology*

The Medica Sur Clinical Foundation continues its interest in professionalizing the editorial processing of AoH in order to support the affiliated hepatology societies and the international community interested in liver medicine. The goal is to be an internationally competitive hepatology journal and fostering the regional publishing needs of the liver scientific community of Mexico, Canada, and Latin America.

Annals of Hepatology entered a new stage in 2018 when Dr. Arturo Panduro took on the challenge of leading our journal as editor-in-chief [2,3], together with Doctors Misael Uribe (Mexico), Norberto Chávez (Mexico), Marco Arrese (Chile) and Claudio Tiribelli (Italy) as members of our new board of co-editors (Fig. 3). This talented team of international experts is in charge of defining the scope and aim of our journal [4,5], selecting the most exciting and influential manuscripts on basic and clinical research which fall within the scope and aim of our journal, and engaging the most prominent hepatology experts worldwide to collaborate with AoH as associate editors, reviewers and authors. AoH's co-editorial board is supported by a renovated international Board of Associate Editors.

Together as a team, we work relentlessly to ensure a swift and increasingly rigorous editorial process, based on a state-of-the-art electronic editorial platform: from the submission of manuscripts and the first round of selections to the peer-review phase of selection

and the final publication of articles. AoH is proud to report that it has achieved a very brief review time totaling 2.3 weeks. Articles published in our journal are authored by clinical specialists and researchers recognized worldwide for their work in liver disease. Some request the publication of their papers in our journal, and others are invited to collaborate by our international network of coeditors and associate editors [6].

One essential asset of AoH is our recently established partnership with Elsevier España, S.L.. We now benefit from the specialized guidance of publisher Clara Capafons and journal manager Angeles Hernandez, who share their valuable expertise with our staff. Our association with Elsevier, an institution regarded as a global model for first-rate scientific publications, carries with it the prestige and resources of a large company with 125 years of experience. Another important asset is the online article-based publishing (ABP) system recently incorporated from Elsevier. ABP increases the visibility of articles by releasing them before full issues are compiled, and thus provides authors with longer citation lifetimes. Finally and importantly, AoH maintains an open-access policy with a minimum article publication fee for authors. This would not be possible without the financial support of the Medica Sur Clinical Foundation. We wish to acknowledge the excellent work of Dr. Giota Panopoulou, Foundation Director and the timely and organized editorial managing of Ms. Varinia B. Chacon (Fig. 3).

Last but not least, AoH achieved an impact factor of 2.4 and Cite-Score of 4.0 recently released by the Web of Science Group's Journal



Fig. 2. Annals of Hepatology's Editorial Board Meeting (Boston, Mass. 2016). Upper line from left to right: Aldo Montaña-Loza (Mexico), Kevor Peltekian (Canada), Arturo Panduro (Mexico), Alejandro Sosa (Chile), Stefano Bellentani (Italy), Adrian Gadano (Italy), Marco Arrese (Chile), Hugo Cheinquer (Brazil), Manuel Romero Gómez (Spain), Misael Uribe (Mexico), Ezequiel Ridruejo (Argentina), Juan Caballeria (Spain), Fernando Bessone (Argentina), Libor Vitek (Austria). Lower line from left to right: Gustavo Castaño (Argentina), Linda Muñoz-Espinoza (Mexico), Andres Cárdenas (Spain), Nahum Méndez-Sánchez (Mexico), Flavio Marra (Italy), Moises Diago (Spain), Raul Andrade (Spain) and Raymundo Paraná (Brazil). (Photo courtesy of Dr. Nahum Mendez).



Fig. 3. Annals of Hepatology's Editorial Board Meeting (Cuernavaca, Morelos, 2018). Left to right: Dr. Giota Panopoulou, Dr. Claudio Tiribelli, Dr. Misael Uribe, Dr. Marco Arrese, Varinia B. Chacón, Dr. Norberto Chávez, Dr. Arturo Panduro and Dr. Eduardo González. (Photo courtesy of Dr. Misael Uribe).

Citation Reports and Scopus' CiteScore, respectively. A goal that we proudly announced to our scientific community in June 2021.

4. Final remarks

Annals of Hepatology is a milestone in the history of scientific medical journals of Mexico on account of nearly 20 years of continuous commitment and hard work from inception to its consolidation. It may be the youngest scientific medical journal in liver medicine in the region. Nonetheless, it has earned and will continue gaining an important place among the worldwide regionalization of the hepatology journals representing the AMH, ALEH, CASL, and most recently, the Czech Society of Hepatology (CSH). Annals of Hepatology's short-term goal is to reach a higher impact factor (5.0), hopefully with the contributions of the devoted scientific community of liver researchers

and hepatologists and the next generation of young specialists and research doctors.

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