

# Research is necessary!

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Clinical Research in the day-to-day routine of an Internist – I include here all the Internists who embrace Internal Medicine as their own – can have various meanings. For some, it may represent an opportunity for intellectual growth, for others, a form of professional fulfilment, or an escape from the daily routine of healthcare activity; for others, it may be a curricular obligation, and for others, something superfluous that is to be avoided, or even a real waste of time. Without doubt, many Internists will identify with at least one of these sentiments.

However, in parallel with healthcare activity and training, research is one of the three vectors that comprise the practice of the Internist. There are three vectors that cross and complement each other on a daily basis, each of them making an essential contribution to building Internal Medicine.

The training program for the medical internship in the professional area of specialization of Internal Medicine<sup>1</sup> embraces this complementarity, and it is said that the Internist, over the period of his or her internship, should acquire increasing autonomy in various areas, one of these being the “elaboration and execution of research projects”. At a European level too, when it comes to the basic competencies of an Internist, research skills are also highly valued: “Internists should be familiar with the scientific bases of Medicine, and with the use of scientific method in medical research. They should also be capable of critically reviewing the results of research studies”.<sup>2</sup>

For Portuguese Internal Medicine, clinical research can also play a fundamental role in the scientific affirmation of the specialization. When we look at other medical specialties, we see that there is clear investment in the development of medical knowledge through research projects, which are also used as vehicles for promoting their own specialties. We also look to our Spanish colleagues; a glance at the website of the Spanish Society of Internal Medicine shows the volume and quality of scientific activity developed by their study centers. Portuguese Internists, in their course of affirmation and recognition among peers, beyond the essential role that they perform

and will perform in the hospital in the future, must also demonstrate their scientific weight with the development of research projects with national and international visibility.

More important than volume, it is important to invest in the quality and scientific impact of the research developed. Analyzing the last National Congress in Internal Medicine,<sup>3</sup> which took place last month in May in Vilamoura, of a total of 906 communications presented, only 13.0% related to epidemiological studies, 6.4% related to case studies, while the remainder consisted of clinical case reports. For the scientific growth of Portuguese Internal Medicine to occur, the inverse proportion is needed; although the study of clinical cases is an excellent opportunity to generate research questions, it is through the development of epidemiological studies, whether descriptive or analytical, that it is possible to add something new to medical knowledge. These research projects are recognized and are also important focuses of improvement of care provided by Internists in their day-to-day healthcare activity.

Besides the call to research, it is also essential to communicate our observations and conclusions, so that the knowledge generated does not remain cloistered between the walls of the Internal Medicine Services. It is necessary to investigate and publish, as only in this way will it be possible to give visibility to the work developed. The *Revista Medicina Interna* will continue to represent, for Portuguese Internists, an opportunity to disseminate the results of their research projects. With the effort of developing, free-of-charge, an online, bilingual edition (Portuguese and English) of the contents of the journal, the possibility of the works published here having internal repercussions becomes very real. The growth of the *Revista Medicina Interna* also depends on this change of paradigm; it is only with the increased volume of original articles relating to epidemiological or casuistic studies, with a corresponding decrease in weight of Clinical Cases in the journal, that it will be possible to achieve our goal of indexation.

We hope, therefore, that Clinical Research will gain

protagonists in the activity of the Internal Medicine Services throughout the country, as it is recognized by all that quality research has long since gone beyond the walls of the university hospitals. Whether with more or less means, it is always possible to generate a research question, design a study that will answer it, and communicate our conclusions to others. ■

## References

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