

For the History of the Portuguese Society of Internal Medicine

Barros Veloso

With around 1000 members the Portuguese Society of Internal Medicine (SPMI) is, at present, one of the biggest Portuguese medical associations. However, very few know anything about its past, reason why in this first issue of “*Medicina Interna*” it seems appropriate to tell a bit of its journey since it was found to the present day.

SPMI history started when its Articles of Association were approved by a Ministerial decree on the 14th December 1951. On the 17th July 1952 it was held the first General Assembly during which was elected and acclaimed the list for the board, as follows:

Chairman: Prof. Mário Moreira

Deputy Chairman: Prof. Alfredo Rocha Pereira

General Secretary: Prof. Xavier Morato

Assistant Secretaries: Dr. Carlos Gomes de Oliveira;
Prof. Arsénio Cordeiro

Treasurer: Dr. Alfredo Franco

The Society inaugural session was held on the 27th December 1952 in the Deeds Hall at Lisbon Medical School, under the presidency of the Education Secretary. For posterity we were left with a photo of the assistance (photo 1) showing the aggregation role that Internal Medicine led at the time: apart of some internists as Eugénio Mac/Bride, Ducla Soares and Cristiano Nina, it is possible to identify Celestino da Costa, Histology Lecturer, Alberto Mac-bride, surgeon, Diogo Furtado, neurologist, Juvenal Esteves, dermatologist, Castro Freire, pediatrician, Manuel Frazão, surgeon, etc. Internal Medicine was then in a golden era due to the influence of main personalities as Pulido Valente and Fernando da Fonseca, a few years before exonerated from the Medical School for political reasons. On the other hand, the movements to separate medical subspecialties were still very weak, reason why Internal Medicine was still the turning the plate of all clinical activity.

A few threats of breaking apart had been felt, apparently in a set back process and could be implied from the Chairman statement, Prof. Mário Moreira, called “Internal Medicine Greatness and Decadence”:

“(…) it is shown at present, a marked trend against the divide of Medicine into specialties, having dehumanizing the former, dividing the patient in departments, each one of a specialist area, ignoring or forgetting the individual “whole” in its general and particular reaction and the interdependency of such departments. (...) We must insist that the patient is a “whole”; that it is not the liver or the heart, the kidney or the stomach which are ill, it is the somatic and psychic human being, physical and spiritual, and it is the disease in its multitude of clinical expressions that the physician must consider while relating with the patient. And only the Internist, honestly informed and updated, can understand the patient as a human whole...(…). Therefore, it is entirely justified the prestige that is coming back to Internal Medicine, that in our country, was kept alive and incarnated, luckily with a number of prestigious physicians within and outside this Society, heirs of a good and old Portuguese medical tradition (...).”

In the inauguration session spoke also Prof. Vaz Serra, representing the International Society, that in a certain moment, mentioned: “Internal Medicine great ambition of today lies on the progress of scientific knowledge, i.e., to replace probability by certainty, doubt for safety and shadow by clarity”.

Throughout its first academic year (1952-1953) SPMI has organized 4 scientific meetings presenting 12 communications, among which were included works on Pediatrics, Neurology and laboratorial techniques, revealing once again, an active participation on the different clinical disciplines in the Society life. It is worth of note that those meetings were always held in Santo Antonio dos Capuchos Hospital, in the so called HCL (Lisbon Civil Hospitals) Medical Society Hall.

In the meanwhile, the board has decided to create a magazine to publish scientific work, but due to lack

of financial means, made an agreement with “O Jornal do Médico” (The Physician Newspaper), through its Director, Dr. Armando Pombal, who charging no fee, has collected the offprint in an yearly publication, “Boletim da Sociedade Portuguesa de Medicina Interna” (Portuguese Society of Internal Medicine Bulletin) (Photo 2).

The first issue of this Bulletin was released at the beginning of 1954 including 10 of 12 communications presented in the scientific sessions. It ended with the “General Secretary and Treasurer Report”, referring to the year 1952-1953 presented by Dr. Gomes de Oliveira, replacing Prof. Xavier Morato that in the meantime had become Chairman of the Medical Sciences Society.

In his report, Dr. Gomes de Oliveira made some comments on Internal Medicine that we transcribe below:

“the contribution brought to the understanding of Pathology by Physiology, Physiopathology, Histology, Biology, etc., transformed many wrong notions, based in more or less speculating theories, in facts of precise verification which open wide paths to the current knowledge and enabled to know, identify and construe the clinical condition with an ever smaller probability of error.

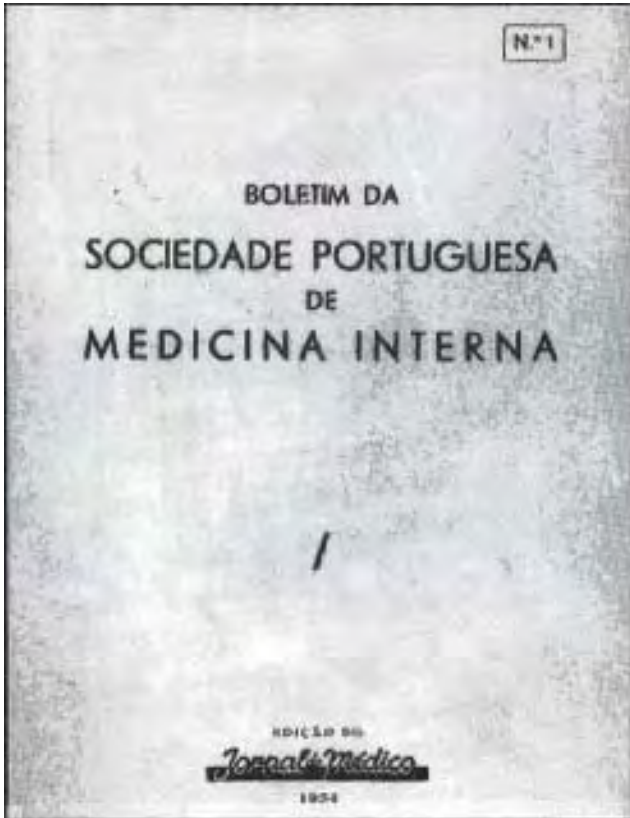
Internal Medicine is like an indoor staircase linking the different floors and corridors of a main building called Medicine. Therefore, it is only understandable that we consider that any contribution made by those who study Internal Medicine towards improving its knowledge, updating it and release it, will be beneficial not only to Medical Science in general but in particular its practical application to the patient, reason of all our concerns”.

On the 2nd year of SPMI existence (1953-1954), Dr Gomes de Oliveira kept his position as General Secre-



View of the attendance to the SPMI inaugural session where can be recognized among others, Juvenal Esteves, Ducla Soares, Celestino da Costa, Manuel Frazão, Cristiano Nina, Diogo Furtado, Castro Freire, Alberto Mac-Bride e Eugénio Mac-Bride.

PHOTO 1



Cover of the first number of the "Portuguese Society of Internal Medicine Bulletin"

PHOTO 2

tary, presenting on the 30th July 1954 the due annual report. According to this document, throughout that year 8 sessions were held and 16 communications were presented there, three of which in a meeting together with the Portuguese Society of ENT-Neuro-Ophthalmology. The number of SPMI members was at the time of 81, of which 56 permanent and 25 associated.

In the following years and until 1963, SPMI life kept very much the same pattern, with the Bulletin yearly publication.

In this period, (1954-1963) new elections were held for the managerial bodies in 1954, 1956, 1958 and 1960, being the following elements which integrate de different Boards:

Board elected on the 30th July 1954

the previous composition was kept, with the following changes: Dr. Gomes de Oliveira took a position as permanent General Secretary, he occupied until, replacing Prof. Xavier Morato, and the position of

Assistant Secretary was taken by Dr. Rafael Adolfo Coelho.

Board elected on the 27th July 1956 and reelected on the 18th July 1958

Chairman: Prof. Augusto Vaz

Deputy Chairmen: Prof. Carlos Salazar de Sousa; Prof. Carlos Ramalhão

General Secretary: Dr. Carlos Gomes de Oliveira

Assistant Secretaries: Prof. Mário de Alenquer; Dr. Pena Carvalho

Treasurer: Dr. Fernando Leal

Board elected on the 9th December 1960

Chairman: Prof. Cerqueira Gomes

Deputy Chairmen: Prof. Mário Trincão; Prof. Armando Ducla Soares

General Secretary: Dr. Carlos Gomes de Oliveira (replaced on the 29th June 1962 by Prof. Mário de Alenquer)

Assistant Secretary: Dr. Luis Abecasis; Dr. Jacinto Simões

Treasurer: Dr. Ludgero Pinto Basto

Between 1954 and 1963, SPMI life was marked by some events deserving special reference.

The academic year 1954-1955 opened on the 3rd December 1954 with a conference by Prof. Mário Moreira called "Medicine for the Body, Medicine for the Soul" and on the 30th April 1955 it was held the first session in Oporto, complying with a decentralization wish of the Society activities.

On the academic year 1955-1956 it is worth of mention the solemn session paying tribute to Prof. Egas Moniz with the presence of the Education Secretary Prof. Leite Pinto (Photo 3).

The academic year 1956-1957 opened on the 23th November 1956 with a lecture by the then SPMI Chairman, Prof. Vaz Serra, named "Internal Medicine Rights and Expectations".

For the academic year of 1957-1958 the Society, apart of all usual sessions, organized between the 6th May and the 18th June 1958, three seminars with a total of 10 sessions and 26 communications, subordinated to the following themes: "Neurosis", "Polio-myelitis" and "Diabetes".

The academic year of 1958-1959 was only inaugurated on the 30th January 1959 under the presidency of Dr. Mario Carmona, then Head Nurse of the Lisbon Civil Hospitals. The inaugural speech under

the heading “Error in Clinic” was delivered by Prof. Augusto Vaz Serra. On the 28th November 1959, the Society meeting was held for the first time in Coimbra Medical School.

For the year 1960 only a session was held, on the 9th December when the board for the biennium 1960-1961 was elected, chaired by Prof. Cerqueira Gomes.

On the 3rd February 1961, the new President has opened the academic year with a speech “Why an Internal Medicine Society?” On the 5th, 6th and 7th April it was held a Symposium on “Kidney Pathology” followed by a further ordinary five sessions, up to the end of that year.

In 1962 it was held, between the 29th March and 4th April, a “Seminar on Cancer” including a total of

11 communications in which several field specialists took part.

From then on, information on SPMI is scarce: the last “sessions minutes” dates from the 3rd April 1962 and the last “Bulletin”, the tenth, including the communications on the “Seminar on Cancer” was released in 1963. In spite of that, through the consultation to scattered documentation it was possible to reconstitute the most prominent events in the Society life between 1963 and 1983. On the 4th February 1963, Prof. Cerqueira Gomes opened the academic year with a conference named “The value of anamnesis”. In that year, 4 more sessions took place, the last one called by Deputy Chairman Prof. Armando Ducla Soares, replacing the General Secretary Mario de Alenquer, deceased in the meanwhile.



Photo 3 – Board in the SMPMI session to pay tribute to Prof. Egas Moniz. From left to right: Vaz Serra, Mário Moreira, Medeiros de Gouveia (representative to the High Culture Institute), Leite Pinto (Education Secretary), Emílio Faro (HCL Head Nurse), Rocha Pereira e Gomes de Oliveira.

PHOTO 3

In 1964, two sessions were held, one on the 24th January and another on the 22nd May and in that same year Prof. Xavier Morato, who had been the first SPMI General Secretary, asked the Treasurer, without any apparent motive to “delete” his name from the associates list.

On the 19th February 1965 in an ordinary session called by the Secretary Dr. Jacinto Simões, two communications were presented.

On the final, it was held a General Assembly in which a Board for the biennium 1965-1967 was elected, composed as follows:

Chairman: Prof. Armando Ducla Soares

Deputy Chairmen: Prof. Joaquim Antunes de Azevedo; Prof. Esteves Pinto

General Secretary: Dr. Jacinto Simões

Assistant Secretaries: Dr. Aragão de Barros; Dr. Pereira Leite

Treasurer: Dr. Luis Abecasis

In the year of 1965, SPMI has held only one session together with the Portuguese Society of Anesthesiology, with a conference by Dr. Paul Herzog, from Karolinska Hospital, about respiratory equipment in the intensive care unit.

In the year of 1966, the Society limited itself to sponsoring the Conferences of “Medical Europe” held in October. In the meanwhile some letters from the Treasurer, Dr. Luis Abecasis, addressed in that same year to several partners, reveal some difficulties while collecting the member fees.

On the 6th and 7th April 1967, the SPMI apart of organizing a Symposium on “New acquisitions on the anemia pathogenesis”, only has sponsored the “Seminar and Series of Conferences on Hepatology” organized by the Gastroenterology Section of the University Service of Medical Propedeutics of Santa Maria Hospital, between the 8th and the 13th May 1967, in which several foreign speakers intervened.

In 1968, SPMI performed on the 7th and 8th May, two sessions focused on Hematology issues in which some national authors cooperate together with foreign guests.

From then on, and for 17 years, there is no other record in the scientific meetings promoted by the Society.

By the end of 1968 it can be seen an exchange of correspondence from Prof. Antunes de Azevedo with the President and the General Secretary, with the target of making the list for the board to be elected

on the following year.

Prof. Antunes de Azevedo was proposed for Chairman and for Deputy Chairman, by Oporto, the names of Profs. Ferraz Junior and Emídio Ribeiro were suggested. However this list election never materialized.

On the 12th December 1968, replying to a request from the Ordem dos Médicos (Portuguese Medical Association) about the SPMI activities for the following year, it was deemed “premature to announce the Society scientific program for 1969 as it is in an organizational stage”. Curiously this document is signed by Mr. Rui Anselmo, a HCL (Lisbon Civil Hospitals) senior administration assistant who, since the Society was found and until this day has done an outstanding job with skill and commitment helping the Board with all secretarial work.

Throughout 1969 there are letters from Prof. Antunes de Azevedo, Mário Trincão e Augusto Vaz Serra, which are also addressed to Mr. Rui Anselmo which seems to show the Board had been inactive. In the following 3 years no record was found regarding SPMI activities.

In 1973, the Treasurer, Dr. Luís Abecasis, made some attempt to collect payments in arrears and in 1974 he asked his resignation. The last letter addressed to members aiming to collect arrears is dated the 8th November 1974 and it is sent to a non-identified Treasurer.

As seems evident, SPMI was in a slow agony which would lead to total eclipse.

Only about 9 years later, i.e., on the 5th February 1983, on occasion of the Internal Medicine Coimbra Conferences and other colleagues who joined him” (as it is mentioned in a mailing dated 15th March the same year signed by Prof. Armando Ducla Soares), an informal meeting with a view to restart SPMI activities. In this mailing it was called upon “the understanding from SPMI members and their subspecialties aiming to get the best possible cooperation in this Society revival”.

On the 28th May 1983 it was held a SPMI General Assembly where only 4 permanent members attended.

After opening the discussion with Dr. Jacinto Simões and Mário Quina intervention, it was presented by Dr. Soares de Sousa a proposal in the sense of being admitted as SPMI members all present internists that, according to the Articles of Association, would be in

a position to do so.

After this proposal being unanimously approved, 120 new members were admitted whose names are mentioned in the meeting minutes. The Board was then elected for the 1983-1985 biennium, composed as follows:

Chairman: Prof. Armando Ducla Soares
 Deputy Chairmen: Prof. Cerqueira Magro; Prof. Armando Porto
 General-Secretary: Dr. Barros Veloso
 Assistant Secretaries: Dr. Domingos Antunes de Azevedo; Dr. Fernando Santos
 Treasurer: Dr. António Castro

In February 1984 it was held a General Assembly when all the new Articles of Association were approved ruling the SPMI existence.

Finally on the 2nd March 1985 it was held a scientific meeting at Lisbon Medical Sciences School called “1st Conferences of the Internal Medicine Portuguese Society”.

The first part focused the analyses of several aspects of “Internal Medicine Current Perspectives” and opened with one of the last public interventions by Prof. Armando Ducla Soares, from which we transcribe some of the most significant parts.

“I still clearly recall Internal Medicine style and praxis in the strict physical Semiology

from the French School with expert physicians followers in Lisbon Medical School. It was the materialization, better, the recognition of the amazing skills as observant and interpreting that made France the medical Mecca with exponential personalities of the 19th Century and their projection to the first quarter of the 20th Century.

I have witnessed the resulting “revolution” of introducing, in the clinical sciences, the achievements from the basic sciences as physics, chemistry, mathematics, biology sciences, and so on, “revolution” due mainly to the height of the Germanic Medical culture and other areas of Central Europe (Austria, Hungary, etc.) (...)

It was the moment of the wide opening in which most Internal Medicine specialties, now based in strict physical observation and chemical approaches and supported in Anatomic Pathology which will become the main piece of demonstration.

1939 war itself, transforming Europe in a furnace of disgrace, brought, apart of the German collapse, the exodus of some of the biggest European scientists to the

USA where the scientific organizations quiet and receptive atmosphere would lead to the top the development of the current medicine, not only as a total, scientific and objective Medicine, as well as specialties and sub specialties reaching the degree of perfection that we all know today. (...) Only the pathology in-depth study leads to the appearance of so sophisticated technique that it was necessary to create specialties which were keeping the specialist away from the total Man (...)

In reality, if specialties are essential to elucidate the pathology specific problem of an organ or a system, so exceptionally they fulfill the role of a total understanding of the patient physiopathology. Reason why Internal Medicine knows how to collect from the sub specialties the essential data to its practice, making a synthesis that covers patients in a wide psychic and somatic view of their sufferings”.

SPMI was therefore entering its second phase, starting from zero. Not even Prof. Armando Ducla Soares calls could avoid an irreversible and consummated movement: the separation of Medical Specialties. From then onwards, Internal Medicine had to assume its own identity and would alone try to recover its lost time.

On the 4th and 5th April 1986, SPMI has performed in the facilities of the Ordem dos Médicos Oporto Regional Section, its 2nd Conference, at the end of which it was elected the Board for the Biennium 1986-1988, made up as follows:

Chairman: Prof. Cerqueira Magro
 Deputy Chairmen: Prof. Armando Porto; Dr. Barros Veloso
 General Secretary: Dr. Luis Pires Gonçalves
 Assistant Secretaries: Dr. Antonio Maria Meirelles; Dr. Fernando Santos
 Treasurer: Dr. Ermelinda Pereira

At the beginning of this new stage, SPMI activities were limited to the organization of a yearly meeting. In 1987 this meeting was held on the 30th May, at Coimbra University Hall opening with a reflection period on the “The current scope of Internal Medicine” followed by the presentation of clinical cases and the discussion of “posters”. For the first time, there was a high participation of internists, with a number of “posters” much higher than expected, a fact that put serious problems to the board, that taken by surprise, was obliged to start a last minute selection. It was clear the internists will to participate in the Society activi-

ties that became the privileged space for its meetings and to present their scientific production.

On the following year (1988) the meeting was held on the 14th May, in the Sciences Faculty of Lisbon and started a round table with the subject “Internal Medicine and Specialties: What Space?” in which took part Drs. Mergulhão Gomes, Barros Veloso, Manuel Miraldo, Joaquim Antunes de Azevedo e Bonnet Monteiro.

In the General Assembly closing this meeting it was elected the Board to the biennium 1988-1990, made up as follows:

Chairman: Prof. Armando Porto

Deputy Chairmen: Prof. Levi Guerra; Dr. Barros Veloso

General Secretary: Dr. Luís Pires Gonçalves

Assistant Secretaries: Dr. Antonio Maria Meirelles; Dr. Fernando Santos

Treasurer: Dra. Maria Ermelinda Pereira

In 1989, SPMI meeting was held on the 26th and 27th May at Oporto São João Hospital, opening with a conference by Prof. Levi Guerra called “The purpose and the need of Internal Medicine in hospital life”.

Once again it was recorded a huge flow of “posters” and free communications which came to confirm the Society growing and renewed vitality, which first signs had been detected, two years before, at Coimbra meeting.

In the meanwhile, the Board took the initiative of dynamizing the SPMI regional activities promoting contacts with the different international organizations linked to Internal Medicine.

Within this line, it was represented on the 19th ISIM Congress (International Society of Internal Medicine) (Brussels 29th August 1988) in the Congress of the Ibero-American Federation (Alicante, 13th September 1988) on the 7th AEMIE European Conference (Brussels, 17th May 1989) and in the 20th ISIM Congress (Stockolm, 17th June 1990).

In this last international meeting, the Portuguese delegation was the second largest, immediately after the Swedish delegation.

In the meantime, it was decided to organize the 1st Internal Medicine National Congress which was held on the Coimbra University Hospitals Hall on the 4th and 5th May 1990. The Congress opened with a conference from Prof. Armando Porto called “The Present and the Future of Internal Medicine”, having been recorded “huge participation and a high number

of communications”, as it is mentioned in the General Secretary report, Dr. Pires Gonçalves.

For the 4th May, first day of the Congress, it had been called a General Assembly to discuss a project for the SPMI new Articles of Association. The justification for this Board initiative is stated on the call itself: “Due to the growing number of the Portuguese Society of Internal Medicine members, the Board found useful to promote a change in the Articles of Association in order to allow the follow up and development of such growth”.

The new Articles of Association which were approved by majority it was created the position of honorary members, the Board composition was widened to 9 members (with 3 Deputy Chairmen and 3 Assistant Secretaries) and it was anticipated the organization, within the Society, of “Study Groups” in specific areas of Internal Medicine.

Due to formal aspects related with the legalization and notary deed of the new Articles of Association, the election of the SPMI managerial bodies which should be held in 1990, was adjourned keeping in office the previous Board.

In the meanwhile, and after contacts between SPMI members and the AEMIE Chairman (Association Européene de Medecine Interne d’Ensemble) it was decided to organize in Lisbon, the XI Congress of the Internal Medicine European Organization, held at the FIL Congress Hall on the 4th, 5th and 6th November 1991.

Throughout this Congress where several Portuguese physicians intervened as Speakers and as “Co-chairmen” were presented several “posters” and free communications by Portuguese internists. On the Congress corridors were chosen two members of SPMI Board (Prof. Armando Porto and Dr. Barros Veloso) to take part in European Internal Medicine Societies Chairmen Forum and the AEMIE Board.

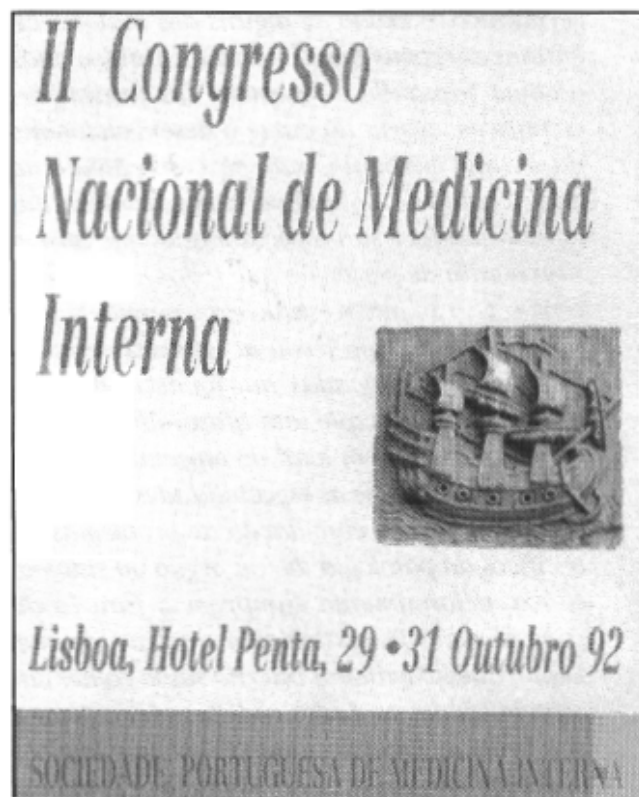
On the 6th November 1991, while the AEMIE XI Congress was going on, it took place in the Medical Association Head Office, in Lisbon, a General Assembly to elect the new managerial bodies to the biennium 1991-1993. The new Board was made up as follows:

Chairman: Dr. Barros Veloso

Deputy Chairmen: Prof. Levi Guerra; Dr. Santana Maia; Dr. Luís Pires Gonçalves

General Secretary: Dr. Luís Dutschmann

Assistant Secretaries: Dr. José Ávila Costa; Dr. Faus-



Cover of the SPMI II Congress Program.

PHOTO 4

tino Ferreira, Dr. Carlos Soares de Sousa
Treasurer: Dr. Fernando Santos

Reviewed the Articles of Association and overtaken the barrier of 800 members, it can be said, that since 1991 the SPMI has entered its 3rd stage.

The Board has then presented a program including the creating of the Study Groups, to hold regional meetings and an increase on international relations.

The Internal Medicine II National Congress that happened in the meantime in Lisbon, in November 1992, was by the level and number of participants, another moment of the Society's life (Photo 4).

Finally the Board took the initiative of issuing the magazine "Medicina Interna", a project that it was imperative to become reality due to the current dynamic of Portuguese Internists.

The conditions to take Internal Medicine to its due position and acquiring a renewed prestige "incarnated in several and well known physicians, heirs of a good and old tradition of Portuguese medical practice" as the first SPMI Chairman anticipated in his inaugural speech in 1952. ■