

AN OVERVIEW OF PERUVIAN DENTAL RESEARCH IN TIME OF COVID-19

PANORAMA DE LA INVESTIGACIÓN ODONTOLÓGICA PERUANA EN LOS TIEMPOS DE LA COVID-19

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The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has represented a major challenge for human beings in 2020. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) (1), at the time this editorial was written (December 7th) there had been a total of 66,422,058 confirmed positive cases and 1,532,418 deaths worldwide. In our country, the latest report released by the Ministry of Health (MINSA) showed a cumulative of 973,918 confirmed cases and 36,274 deaths (2). This dramatic scenario has led to various limitations in all aspects of our lives, forcing us to adapt to the “new normality” that includes strong protection measures to restrain the spread of this viral infection among our population (3). Although these restrictions have progressively been lifted over the previous months, educational activity at all levels has not yet been reestablished.

Along with education, scientific activity in our country has been severely affected during the COVID-19 pandemic. The closure of research laboratories during the first months of mandatory quarantine, and the cancellation of various sources of funding, except those related to the study of SARS-CoV-2 and its impact on society, definitely slowed the scientific productivity of Peruvian researchers in non-medical or biological-related fields. As of today, a rapid review of the SCOPUS database in the sub-area of “dentistry” shows that 116 articles with Peruvian affiliation have been published in 2020. Of these 116 articles, 50 (57, including journals in the field of medicine or biology) belong to the School of Stomatology of our institution, the *Universidad Científica del Sur*, which is leading the scientific productivity in dental sciences in our country, followed by 42 articles from the Faculty of Dentistry of the National University of San Marcos, and in third place, the School of Dentistry of the Federico Villareal National University with 17 papers published. These results demonstrate that despite the negative conditions such as viral spread, local restrictions, lack of funding—which is not usually generous for dental research—and the virtualization of education, the production of publications in dental sciences in Peru has not been paralyzed. For instance, methodological designs involving the use of virtual surveys and biomaterial in *in vitro* experiments have been popular among researchers or degree-seeking students for the completion of their undergraduate thesis projects. In addition, the publication of literature reviews, short communications, or letters to the editor focusing on the relationship

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between COVID-19 and dental practice increased in number in our country, following the global publication trend ⁽⁴⁾. Unlike the medical field, which accounts for most of the scientific production, there were no articles presenting clinical research (clinical trials or protocols) in patients infected with SARS-CoV-2 ⁽⁵⁾. There is only one case report describing the oral manifestations of COVID-19, although the information of patients was taken from neighboring countries ⁽⁶⁾. This situation can be explained due to the low participation of dental staff in hospital centers or private clinics, and because of the

closure of outpatient clinics of the dental schools in the country.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the “new normality” has changed our reality and forced academics to seek different ways to produce -and share- scientific knowledge. It is comforting to know that even amidst adversity, the spirit of self-improvement and dedication prevails in our small, albeit growing, dental research community. Although tomorrow may be uncertain, let us remain committed to guiding our profession in light of the scientific evidence.

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