

# The past is a prologue...the real history begins now

John Ospina Nieto, MD.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Editor- Director

Received: 02-02-12

Accepted: 28-02-12

The great William Shakespeare wrote the phrase that inspired the title of this editorial. Who could think of a better bibliographic reference to start this hard work that my teammates and I have begun with your support? You, our readers and our partners, are the reason for these lines and the engine of this journal.

For some authors, and rightly so, a prologue is one of the most important parts of a text. It is also the step prior to explaining or showing an important circumstance of the piece. A prologue often provides the critical key to the interpretation of the text of the author or of someone close to him. This is what this great 25 year long process has been: the best of all prologues and the best introduction to our magazine.

The legacy that we received is 25 years of history and 26 volumes of nonstop publication over more than a quarter century. It is the fruit of the effort and dedication of the editors and authors of what we consider today to be the “Crown Jewel” of our association: *The Colombian Review of Gastroenterology*. This journal is the most important academic magazine and the most useful continuing education tool for our associates and readers. This jewel, to me and to my editorial committee, is undoubtedly the most important academic magazine and the most important educational tool. We intend to develop it with pride, respect, and dedication.

I want to start our work by sincerely recognizing the tremendous work of those who have preceded us. It is impossible to forget or not to recognize those who spent long hours of work and family time building what today is our magazine. I prefer not to mention everyone by name only in order to avoid the mistake of depriving someone of our undying admiration. To all of them we give our respect and gratitude for teaching us the way and for leaving the door open for us to continue the task of building this magazine. During these 25 years great goals have been achieved. A few of them are the initial indexing of the magazine, the rise to category A1, and then indexing in bibliographic databases such as Lilacs, Scielo, EPSCO, and Scopus.

Shakespeare the dramaturge wrote, “... Whereof what’s past is prologue, what to come In yours and my discharge.” Today, 26 years after our prologue began, what is to come is our reality. This important and invaluable academic work revives the Greco-Roman concept for which an introduction was a discourse in a theater preceding the performance of a play and in which the plot of the play itself was narrated. Today, after our colleagues’ great efforts to write the original version of our magazine, we begin on another great road. We start a more momentous work. It is our task to not only sustain what has already been achieved but to improve our magazine so that we can honor the dreams of those who founded it, built it and gave it to us. We want to honor especially those

who read it and will read it. We also want to honor those who seek us out in order to share their experiences, cases, patients or products and those who see us as an important tool for their training and as a significant part of their academic life.

In this editorial stage beginning with Issue Number 1 of Volume 27, which we hope will last for at least 25 more years, we must look to the future. We start from the clear understanding that the globalized present of our world embodies the academic, technological, scientific, and administrative changes of the last decades which require that we change the way we do things. Our mission is constant self-assessment so that we can strive to achieve the utmost quality. As a result, together with my team, I look forward to implementing some of the following changes:

- Indexing the magazine on a permanent basis and improving its standards. We hope to go from level A2 to A1 under Colciencia's standards.
- Building and improving the editorial process to achieve the highest quality in our publications. This will be accompanied by an editorial and scientific committee of the highest quality and attributes. We present this editorial team in this edition along with a process described in the article "Learning about the Editorial Process: The Road to Publication" by Dr. Blanco.
- Development of our own website to provide a better "view" of our academic publication, and to allow it to be tracked by various search engines. This is a fundamental pillar for improving the virtual impact of the magazine which is currently estimated at 0.026. Improving the virtual impact of our magazine is key for being listed at Pubmed and at Medline.
- As already mentioned, the magazine is indexed in the best bibliographic databases, a situation that no other Colombian magazine has achieved in the last 22 years.
- The implementation of ongoing communication among our authors combined with continuing support from each of our contributors for the development and improvement of the epidemiological and scientific work of all of the others.
- Changes in our publication rules for authors and the introduction of a check list published in this and subsequent editions which will facilitate construction and evaluation of an article before it is submitted to the magazine.

I realize that as an editor I might not see these achievements. In fact, it is likely that my administration will not reach any of them, but this stop along the way may serve to bring about a solid and promising future for our magazine. If this is the will of all of us, then this is close to becoming a reality. Future publishers and their groups will have

a calmer scenario to help them develop their projects in a faster and safer way.

Many of you may wonder why there are only two scientific articles published in this edition and not the usual 10 or 12. Also, why are some of the sections like controversies, clinical problems, and case reports empty? Well, the reason is clear, and it is my duty to tell you. As you will read in the inside pages in the article that explains the editorial process, this action with its new changes we are implementing is a long and detailed road that requires attention to detail and commitment from everyone, especially from those in the scientific community.

The reasons for this reflection that maybe some of you are already debating, and that requires today's stop along the way are, among others:

1. It is incredible that our country, despite its great academic and scientific potential, has so little material for publication and review. This situation is critical because a look at our files and at the international indices shows only a minimal Colombian presence minimal. Our production in Medline records is not only lower than the Latin American average; it is also below the average for African countries. Colombia - to everyone's surprise- produces fewer items than Chile, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina and even Venezuela, Peru, Costa Rica and Panama (on a per capita basis). This does not even take into account that the database used to evaluate the magazine's articles has less than 20 pieces.
2. Although we have materials and articles of great interest to the scientific community, they often do not meet the editing standards of our magazine. Nor do they meet those of other scientific magazines which, like our magazine, accept the Vancouver consensus. This consensus governs us as scientific publication. It requires that we waiting for changes in articles by authors before publication which slows the publication process.
3. On the occasions when material meets the minimum requirements, it often lacks either a letter ceding rights or a conflict of interest statement (an essential document for the publication of any work). It may also lack original graphics and photos as well as keywords for the databases to which we belong.
4. Sometimes, when an article is sent to a peer reviewer, the reviewer does not return it. Whether this occurs for family reasons, work reasons, are for some other reasons, the result is that articles do not arrive in time for publication deadlines. This delays the entire publication process and causes the magazine additional lost time searching for new reviewers.
5. Even in the best scenario, when the work is reviewed in a timely fashion by the peer reviewers, and is sent to authors for changes, the authors often do not make

changes on time. In fact, in many instances they never make the proper changes, or even express their simply agreement or disagreement with the peer reviewers' comments.

All of this definitely and directly affects the editorial process and the quality of the articles.

As, in these 25 years we have witnessed major advances in technology, pharmacology, and academic knowledge. They have impacted the way we look at, practice, and teach our professions of gastroenterology, coloproctology, hepatology, pediatric gastroenterology and endoscopy. We all have been part of these changes and will continue being so. The pages of our magazine have registered this transformation and have fixed in our memories the great advances of this quarter century. Our magazine will continue doing so even though these changes are occurring on a daily basis. The major developments and academic events taking place in our country and overseas will be recorded by the quiet, carefully done and very special pages of our jewel. A jewel that has an owner: **you readers and our associates!** Our differences of opinion or style should not affect the jewel that deserves full respect and dedication from all. Finally, I would like to raise some topics to think about for the future, and not the very far future I hope. I sincerely believe that these changes in the form of the magazine should be accompanied by deeper changes to strengthen our journal. We should consider the possibilities of:

- Changing the system of selecting our editor. Why not let the board of directors, in the presence of a general assembly, vote from a list of three candidates proposed by the current president of the association. Or maybe it should be the other way around, an election from a list of three candidates presented by the Board to the assembly.
- Extension of the editor's term period to three years so that it will not interfere with the election of the board of directors. To this should be added the possibility of reelecting the editor for up to 3 periods.
- Modification of the statues and organizational structure that govern the magazine approved by the assembly. Only the assembly, as opposed to any inferior body of our organization, should be authorized to make

changes in the statues and organizational structure of the magazine.

- Incentives for those who individually or collectively make an effort to constantly publish should be established.
- A peer review group should be created, and its members should receive due recognition for their work. This work should be recorded on the main pages of the magazine. A group of self motivated reviewers motivated by honor and the work itself is needed. This could result in quicker peer review responses. In addition, members from different areas of professional interest should be added to the pairs of peer reviewers in this group.
- We should consider changing the magazine's frequency from four times a year to two times a year in accordance with the commitment of the authors and reviewers. Maybe this is a critical issue, since the ideal should be a twice a month publication. However, given the current situation and the small amount of work being done, I believe it is very difficult to comply with the periodicity of the magazine (an important evaluation factor for indexing). Besides, it is also noteworthy that the editorial process, with all that this implies, involves an annual investment of close to 90 million Colombian pesos. This is a price that we surely might be willing to pay for excellent material and an excellent publication. However, until we reach that goal, and I know we will do it, a change in frequency will not only strengthen the editorial process but will also significantly decrease costs while improving quality. This means contraction of the magazine with the aim of future expansion.

**“What's past is prologue. What to come, In yours and my discharge”. We are all invited to write this magazine.**

Participation of all of you is of vital importance in this process which begins on the basis of the great work done by our predecessors. It continues with the work they have entrusted to us. It will continue with the improvements in what we are going to deliver in the next two years or before the next editorial committee.

Since we have been invited to write this story, all of you and ourselves, we, the editorial committee, invite you once again to start working now in the construction of the best scientific magazine of the country. Why not?