



## THE COLOMBIAN JOURNAL OF OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY (*REVISTA COLOMBIANA DE OBSTETRICIA Y GINECOLOGÍA*) AND ITS VALUE FOR THE COLOMBIAN FEDERATION OF OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY, FECOLSOG

One of the loftiest objectives of scientific societies is to promote science in the different fields of knowledge. The very first scientific society was the Royal Society of London, created in the United Kingdom in 1660, also known by the name of Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge. It was created as a “college for the promotion of experimental learning of physics and mathematics” and it published the first scientific journal in 1666 under the title of *Philosophical Transactions* (1, 2), which remained the most important scientific publication until the emergence of specialized journals in the 19th century. At first, *Philosophical Transactions* was home to news, letters and descriptions of experimental reports lacking standardized format or style (3). The first organization to publish a medical journal was the Edinburgh Medical School in 1731, with its *Medical Essays and Observations*, which became the *Edinburgh Medical Journal* two years later and was a peer-reviewed publication since 1733 (4). In the United States, the first medical journal was the *Medical Repository*, published for the first time in 1797 (5). In the United Kingdom, *The Lancet* appeared in 1823 containing the work developed in the London medical schools as well as case reports, followed by the *British Medical Journal* in 1853, as a result of the newly created British Medical Association (4). In 1887, *Philosophical Transactions* was split into two new publications: one journal focused on mathematics and physics, and the second devoted to biology. In 1989, an important

innovation came on stage: anonymous peer review of the content. All of the above is a reminder of the fact that medical journals originated from within scientific societies and medical schools with the aim of describing the methodologies as well as the results of their research and have been characterized from the very beginning by a rigorous anonymous peer review process.

The purpose of scientific societies is no different in the 21st century. The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists states that its most altruistic objective is the “encouragement of the study and the advancement of the science and practice of obstetrics and gynaecology” (6). In turn, the mission statement of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists is “to be a membership organization dedicated to the advancement of women’s health care and the professional and socioeconomic interests of its members through continuing medical education, practice, research, and advocacy” (7).

In Colombia, the Colombian Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology (today the Colombian Federation of Obstetrics and Gynecology - FECOLSOG), founded in 1947, created the Colombian Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology (*Revista Colombiana de Obstetricia y Ginecología* - RCOG) in 1950. Then, in 1953, it defined its mission as primarily scientific but also organizational (8). True to this premise, it supported the journal and organized the first National Congress of Obstetrics and Gynecology in 1953. In 1967, FECOLSOG

reaffirmed its incorporation as a scientific society to gather and bring together the regional associations of specialists in obstetrics and gynecology throughout the Republic of Colombia (9).

In its renewed mission statement, FECOLSOG seeks to gather and represent all obstetricians and gynecologists and other members, and to promote scientific, academic, political, organizational, ethical and social development by means of strategies designed to ensure comprehensive wellbeing for its members and optimal health conditions for women. Its quality goals include the following: 1) to ensure service provision and the supply of top-quality products to its associates, affiliates and the community; and 2) to promote the ethical, scientific and organizational development of obstetrics and gynecology in the country (10).

As a scientific organization, FECOLSOG has published RCOG unfailingly for 70 years; it held the XXXI Colombian Congress of the specialty this year; eight years ago, it received the endorsement of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, which it represents in Colombia; and it recently created the Medical Education Department to provide short diploma courses, continuing education programs and training courses (for example the course on “Key practices that save lives”), addressed to general practitioners, nurses and specialist physicians, creating meaningful impact on extreme maternal morbidity and maternal mortality in the country.

RCOG, regional and national obstetrics and gynecology congresses, and continuing education activities are all sources of financial return for the Federation. Although revenues from RCOG are not significant, the journal is part of the value chain because it reaches all obstetricians and gynecologists of the affiliated organizations that are part of FECOLSOG. Moreover, it is a source of regional information and it plays the important social responsibility role of promoting and disseminating scientific knowledge and bringing under the spotlight public health issues and their relevance in the country. Accordingly, the

latest volume of the journal (Volume 69) includes articles regarding the problem of suicide as a cause of maternal mortality, the importance of the genitourinary syndrome of menopause, and the prevalence of gestational diabetes pursuant to the new world definitions. Likewise, public health technologies have been assessed in the local setting, including the use of episiotomy, the self-sampling device for human papilloma virus (HPV) DNA testing, or the safety of new applications for minimally invasive surgical techniques. The results of innovations in education, and the publication of evidence-based Clinical Practice Guidelines (11, 12) developed in Colombia, as well as local expert consensus have also been subjects of analysis (13-15). This information originating in local and regional scientific research is undoubtedly of great value for specialists, general practitioners, nurses, undergraduate and graduate students of the specialty and other related areas, in Colombia as well as in the Latin-American region.

The 100,000 yearly visits to the RCOG website confirm the status of the journal as one of the most important communication media for research in the field of sexual and reproductive health in the continent. Compliance with high scientific and editorial standards accounts for this achievement: anonymous peer review process since 2001; wider focus to cover all aspects pertaining to women’s sexual and reproductive health, including public health and gender issues (also part of the studies published in this issue) since 2004; and inclusion in the main international databases such as Scopus, EBSCO, ISI, Redalyc, Lilacs, SciELO and Imbiomed, and national databases like Publindex. The application for inclusion in the National Library of Medicine (NLM) was submitted again this year. As part of the editorial process, RCOG provides methodological guidance to the authors and encourages the use of quality reporting tools such as CONSORT, STROBE, PRISMA and AGREE II. The editorial process has also been made stronger in different areas: ethics, by means of the involvement of an

expert in ethics and membership and participation in the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE); quality assurance, with the Icontec certification and originality review using the Ithenticate® software. RCOG has introduced innovations in the Case Report section to include review of the literature on rare conditions or interventions for which finding randomized clinical trials may be unfeasible. In 2015, RCOG migrated entirely to the electronic version, in keeping with environmental protection, the trends in information and communication technologies, and in order to allow open access.

At a time when doubts emerge within a scientific society regarding the importance of having a top-quality journal intended to promote the creation of knowledge and the dissemination of research conducted in the country and the region in the fields of obstetrics and gynecology, public health and women's sexual and reproductive health, it is important to retrace the history and origin of these associations, their aims and most essential values, in order to avoid repeating past mistakes, as stated by doctor Jesús Alberto Gómez Palacino back in 2004 (16). Granted, significant costs are associated with a publication of these characteristics, but it is important to realize that RCOG is a weighty asset in FECOLSOG's value chain and mission statement as a scientific society. For this reason, it is incumbent on us to explore old or new funding alternatives, as was the appeal from FECOLSOG's President, doctor José William León in his editorial for issue 1 published in 2005 (17).

FECOLSOG and RCOG must find guidance in history and strive to achieve their loftiest goals in order not to stray from their path in a world in which monetary value or wealth generation appear to rule over other values that are also important and necessary for our human race.

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