Women's journey in Mexican rheumatology. Comment on 'Gender gap in rheumatology: speaker representation at annual conferences' by Monga *et al*

We read with great interest the letter written by Monga *et al* addressing the narrowing of the gender gap in the annual meetings of the American College of Rheumatology, in which they reported an increase in female speakers from 42.8% in 2017 to 47.0% in 2018.¹ However, women under-representation goes beyond annual meetings as Adami *et al* found that of 366 guidelines and recommendations in Rheumatology published from 2004 to 2019, only 32% of first authors were women, a proportion which has been increasing in the last 15 years.² Their findings propelled us to evaluate women's participation as first authors of oral presentations in the annual meetings of the Mexican College of Rheumatology (MCR).

We evaluated the abstracts accepted as oral presentations of the MCR from 2011 to 2018; research using the first author's last name and affiliation was performed to identify authors and classify them as women or men. Presentations were classified as basic or clinical research, and according to the rheumatic disease evaluated: rheumatoid arthritis (RA), systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), osteoarthritis, idiopathic juvenile arthritis, vasculitis, myopathies, psoriatic arthritis, systemic sclerosis, spondyloarthropathies, anti-phospholipid syndrome (APS), crystal arthropathies or miscellaneous. Authors who we were unable to identify as men or women were eliminated.

We found a total of 153 oral presentations; registries from 2015 were not found. Overall, 79 (51.6%) women were listed as first authors. The highest female participation was in 2011 (70.83%), and the lowest in 2017 (43.4%). Overall, women participation decreased by 20.8% from 2011 to 2018. The greatest fall in the percentage of women as first authors was from 2011 to 2012 (24.6%), and the highest increase from 2012 to 2013 (14.95%). Full results are shown in figure 1. Most oral presentations with a female first author were in clinical research (n=50, 63.3%), predominantly regarding SLE (n=13, 26%), RA (n=12, 24%), APS (n=6, 12%) and crystal arthropathies (n=4, 8%).

Women representation as first authors of the oral presentations of the MCR has followed a waxing and waning course. However,

Figure 1 Women's representation through the years as first authors of oral presentations in the annual meetings of the Mexican College of Rheumatology.

our findings are similar to those reported by Monga *et al* as women have steadily retained >40% of first authorship of the oral sessions.

In Mexico, up to 2017, a total of 379 (42.1%) rheumatologists were women.³ This percentage could change soon as women currently represent 59.5% (n=75) of 126 rheumatology residents. Whether this female predominance in future rheumatologists will change female representation in the annual meetings of the MCR—and everywhere—is yet to be seen.

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Contributors IJC-P, GS-P and DAG-D conceived the idea and approved the final version. GS-P, RIA-R, DAR, AP-V and MARS contributed to data collection and data analysis. RIA-R and ALD-L-I wrote the manuscript.

Funding The authors have not declared a specific grant for this research from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Competing interests None declared.

Patient and public involvement Patients and/or the public were not involved in the design, or conduct, or reporting, or dissemination plans of this research.

Patient consent for publication Not required.

Provenance and peer review Not commissioned; internally peer reviewed.

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To cite Colunga-Pedraza IJ, Arvizu-Rivera RI, Serna-Peña G, *et al*. *Ann Rheum Dis* Epub ahead of print: [please include Day Month Year]. doi:10.1136/annrheumdis-2020-218541

Received 12 July 2020

Accepted 14 July 2020

► <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/annrheumdis-2020-218630>

Ann Rheum Dis 2020;0:1. doi:10.1136/annrheumdis-2020-218541

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