Dear Editor,

In April 1960, Dr. Álvaro Gómez-Leal, a hematologist trained at the Instituto Nacional de Nutrición Salvador Zubirán (INCMNSZ), presented during the first meeting of the Agrupación Mexicana para el Estudio de la Hematología, A.C., data on a transplant of allogeneic stem cells in a patient with acute leukemia done in Monterrey, Mexico (Fig. 1A): the patient received high-dose chemotherapy followed by stem cells from the bone marrow of his brother, improving and obtaining remission for months but relapsing and subsequently died. This was the first report of a hematopoietic stem cell transplantation (HSCT) conducted in Mexico, only 4 years after the pioneer work by E. Donnall Thomas in Cooperstown, New York, USA1. Years later, in 1980, Ricardo Sosa and his coworkers at the INCMNSZ conducted and published formally a HSCT2. Since then, more than 7500 HSCTs have been performed in México in over 10 HSCT centers, headed by physicians either trained at the INCMNSZ of by their trainees (Fig. 1B).

May this be an homage to the institution which now celebrates its 75th anniversary and to the physicians involved in starting the HSCT activity in Mexico, who taught us that the obstacles are there to be surpassed. In an era in which the practice of HSCT was restricted to few centers in high-income countries, we were taught that they could be done in low- and middle-income countries. Despite these outstanding achievements, in México, we are performing only 5-10% of all the HSCT that should ideally be done. We still have a long way to go along the road started by true giants.

REFERENCES


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Figure 1. (A) Abstract of the paper presented by Dr. Alvaro Gomez-Leal in April 18, 1960, during the first congress of the Agrupación Mexicana para el Estudio de la Hematología held in Mexico City. (B) Number of hematopoietic stem cell transplants conducted in some centers in México. IMSS: Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social; UMAE: Unidad Médica de Alta Especialidad; UANL: Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León; CMN: Centro Médico Nacional; ISSSTE: Instituto de Seguridad y Servicios Sociales para Trabajadores del Estado; INP: Instituto Nacional de Pediatría; INCMNSZ: Instituto Nacional de Ciencias Médicas y Nutrición Salvador Zubirán; ABC: American British Cowdray.