



The value of networking

El valor de las redes

Enrique Soto-Pérez-de-Celis^{1,2*}

¹Editor in Chief, Mexican Journal of Oncology; ²Department of Geriatrics, Instituto Nacional de Ciencias Médicas y Nutrición Salvador Zubirán, Mexico City, Mexico

Among the myriad of changes brought by the pandemic to the way, in which we practice oncology, some of the most drastic ones have been in the field of education. Medical students were no longer able to attend the classrooms, fellows had to stop seeing patients with cancer to treat COVID-19, our sessions and tumor boards became virtual, and we no longer were travelling to medical meetings. The large conference centers and exhibit halls were replaced by virtual meeting rooms, and instead of being in Chicago or Mérida, we sat and obtained oncology knowledge in our living rooms or offices.

In many ways, virtual meetings were a blessing and a success. We were able to keep in touch with the latest research in the field, to keep up with necessary continuous medical education, and to see people from all over the world from the safety of our home. In addition, without the need to make large monetary or time investments in travel, it became easier from people to attend conferences that they had never gone to before all around the world. Some conferences, like the American Society of Clinical Oncology Annual Meeting, even saw an exciting increase in the number of delegates from low-and middle-income countries, who before were unable to join the meeting in person. However, while access was improved by virtual conferencing, we lost the ability to network and to meet with other people sharing our same interests and passions, to discuss projects over a cup of coffee (or a bottle of beer), and to see old and new friends in person.

Last year, during the last Omicron waves, the Annual Meeting of the Mexican Society of Oncology (SMeO) returned in a hybrid format in Monterrey, and we were able to reunite with colleagues, we had not seen in a long time. However, this year SMeO's annual meeting is returning in full force to the city of Chihuahua, in northern Mexico, and me and the rest of the team at the Mexican Journal of Oncology are thrilled of the many interesting developments and activities that will be taking place.

In a world where the most relevant and practice-changing research is presented in global meetings, it is sometimes difficult to understand the place of national or regional meetings. However, there is an incredible value for Mexican oncologists to be able to interact with some of the best and brightest in the various fields of cancer care both nationally and internationally, as happens every year at the SMeO Annual Meeting. Arguably, the most relevant part of this interaction should take place outside of the conference rooms, where new connections leading to exciting new projects or life-changing collaborations can take place. Some of the best connections I have ever made, including meeting my mentor, Dr. Arti Hurria, happened at a conference, and it is an opportunity that cannot be missed.

Many attendees will also be presenting their research at this year's SMeO meeting, both in poster and in oral formats. A few will also obtain awards for that research, including the National Oncology Award and the newly minted Award for Pharmacoeconomic Research, which

*Correspondence:

Enrique Soto-Pérez-de-Celis

E-mail: enrique.sotop@incmnsz.mx

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showcase the best abstracts submitted for the conference. The Mexican Journal of Oncology is looking forward to being the home of those manuscripts, and to publish them in a rapid fashion so that the knowledge can be disseminated beyond the reach of the conference center. We are also very interested in helping researchers turn the work presented in their abstracts into manuscripts that can be published in our journal or elsewhere. To do that, earlier this year, we launched a call for SMeO members interested in participating in the British Medical Journal's course "From Research to Publication" which, through a strong and very high-quality curriculum, provides the foundation for writing a medical manuscript. I'm proud to say that the response from our membership was extraordinary, and we were able to give more than 40 full scholarships to this course.

I sincerely hope that soon we will start seeing more and more papers coming out of our country due to this and other initiatives.

Hence, this November I hope to see many of you, readers of the Mexican Journal of Oncology, at the SMeO Annual Meeting in Chihuahua. The program is very comprehensive, and the speakers are world-class. I also hope that many of you will find the opportunity to approach someone you admire, start a collaboration, or find an interesting new field of cancer care. The Mexican Journal of Oncology is looking forward to receiving your abstracts as full manuscripts and, if you see me at the conference and have a question regarding a potential submission, do not hesitate to ask. After all, that is the most valuable aspects of in-person meetings, human interaction.