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HISTORY ARTICLE

The Rheumatology Service, a milestone within the *Hospital General de México Dr. Eduardo Liceaga*

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The history of Rheumatology at the *Hospital General de México* (HGM) dates to the end of the 60s, with the arrival of the Hungarian doctor Gabor Katona, who received the invitation of Dr. Fernando Martínez Cortés, then director of the HGM, to work in this Institution and join pavilion 29. He worked hard to establish a service for patient care, teaching rheumatology and clinical pharmacology studies.

In 1975, Gabor Katona and a group of eminent rheumatologists in the country, achieved the recognition of Rheumatology as a medical specialty with the endorsement of the postgraduate division of the *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México* in the Rheumatology services of the National Institute of Nutrition (Donato Alarcón Segovia); National Medical Center of the Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social (Gregorio Mintz Spiro), National Institute of Cardiology (Javier Robles Gil), *Hospital General de La Raza* (Antonio Fraga Mouret), and *Hospital 20 de Noviembre* of the *Instituto de Seguridad y Servicios Sociales de los Trabajadores del Estado* (Jorge Badia Flores). Part of the same group and others founded the Mexican Council of Rheumatology. In this way, the recognition of the rheumatologists graduated from the programs by the General Directorate of Professions and the Mexican Council of Rheumatology was achieved as of 1975.

The rheumatology service has three linked lines of work: medical care, teaching, and research attached to a vision, mission, and values that have led it to national and international recognition.

Teaching

The first rheumatologists trained by Gabor Katona at the HGM finished the Rheumatology course in 1975, since then, two to six students have joined the postgraduate course in Rheumatology per year, therefore, 132 residents have graduated until 2023, including foreigners, additionally we are a venue for rotations of various specialties in the country and abroad (Bulgaria, Spain, Italy, Austria, Argentina, Colombia, Venezuela, Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador), likewise over the years more professors have been added to the staff of the specialty, now having more adjuncts and assistants (10) who actively participate in the training of residents and undergraduate students from different universities.

Currently, there is a program that is modified around every five years, and that frequently includes rotation to other services and institutions such as the rehabilitation service within the HGM, pulmonology at the Instituto Nacional de Enfermedades Respiratorias Ismael Cosío Villegas, pediatric rheumatology within the *Hospital Infantil de México Federico Gómez* and neurology within the *Instituto Nacional de Neurología Manuel Velasco Suárez*.

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Health care

While at the beginning we had six beds and two offices, as the years went by, we now have 12 beds and 5 offices divided into two. The medical care provided has been organized by disease clinics, which have helped teaching and research. Due to the rapid growth of the population and pathologies treated, in 1995 the doctors assigned to the service decided to organize medical care in specialized clinics that over time have been modified according to the needs of the service, to date it is organized in order of importance, (1) Outpatient consultation: filter consultation (where the patient is evaluated and classified for the first time and then channeled to the corresponding clinics), the specialized clinics are: Rheumatoid arthritis, Systemic lupus erythematosus, Spondyloarthritis, Psoriatic arthritis, Gout, Connective tissue diseases (inflammatory myopathies, systemic sclerosis, human adjuvant disease, vasculitis, and other low-frequency autoimmune pathologies), Fibromyalgia and Arthritis of recent onset.

Healthcare activities underwent important changes as a result of the 1985 earthquake and the COVID-19 epidemic. In the first, the disappearance of the hospital was proposed, and in the second, the major modifications for patient safety. During the last administrative management of the service, more certified rheumatologists were hired, which provided the opportunity to open the evening consultation and a reproductive health clinic in pregnancy in patients with autoimmune diseases.

Over the years, an increase in the indicators of first-time and subsequent consultations, as well as hospital discharges, has been observed, with around 15,000 medical visits and 190 hospital discharges per year. The two main causes of subsequent care are rheumatoid arthritis (42.9%) and, in second place, systemic lupus erythematosus (23.5%). The first place in hospitalization is occupied by systemic lupus erythematosus. The rheumatology service is made up of 13 physicians, 100% of the rheumatologists are currently certified (Table 1).

Table 1. Rheumatology service physicians

Dr. Gabriel Medrano Ramírez Head of Service	
Doctors assigned to the morning shift	
Dr. Everardo Álvarez Hernández Dr. Julio César Casasola Vargas Dra. Gabriela Huerta Sil	Dra. Graciela Meza López y Olguín Dra. Leticia Lino Pérez Dr. José Francisco Moctezuma Rios
Doctors assigned to the afternoon shift	
Dra. Karina I. Arias Callejas Dra. Adriana C. Lobato Belmonte Dr. David A. Vargas Gutiérrez	
Research area	
Dr. Ruben Burgos Vargas Dra. N. Janitzia Vázquez-Mellado C. Dra. Ingris Peláez-Ballestas	

Research

Despite being considered a non-priority activity, especially in the units dedicated to medical care, our service has played an important role in national and international research.

In 1983 he began the field of clinical and basic research in the rheumatology service with Dr. Rubén Burgos Vargas (who had a stay in England to train additionally in pediatric rheumatology), on his return he developed projects in different areas of rheumatology (adults and pediatrics), to later and to date form one of the great pillars of the service and of international reference. Spondyloarthritis In 1990, Dr. Janitzia Vázquez-Mellado Cervantes, at the end of her residency, completed a master's and doctorate in medical sciences at the *Instituto Nacional de Nutrición Salvador Zubirán*, returning in 1995 to form and develop the gout clinic, another of the pillars and international reference of the service. Dr. Ingris Peláez Ballestas, with a doctorate in epidemiology, has largely developed epidemiological research in rheumatology with national and international projects. Currently, there is an emeritus SNI 3 level F, an SNI 3 level D, and an SNI 3 level E. The other rheumatologists in the service have also joined this group, generating remarkable productivity. Productivity indicators, such as publications, presentations at conferences, and participation in multiple international teams and working groups to edit a multitude of works of international application, such as participation in the development of diagnostic guidelines and therapeutic recommendations, efficacy and safety studies, cohort studies of various diseases and epidemiological studies in collaboration with multiple institutions have been received from various national and international awards (Table 2).

Funding

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Table 2. Academic productivity of the Rheumatology Service

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Publications in journals	34	21	10	18	25	23	28	25	52
Papers at national and international conferences	7	19	22	23	1	20	6	0	8
Distinctions and awards	0	1	2	3	1	1	0	1	1

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Ethical considerations

Protection of human subjects and animals. The authors declare that the procedures followed were in accordance with the ethical standards of the responsible committee on human experimentation and with the World Medical Association and the Declaration of Helsinki. The procedures were authorized by the Institutional Ethics Committee.

Confidentiality, informed consent, and ethical approval. This study does not involve personal patient data, medical records, or biological samples, and does not require ethical approval. SAGER guidelines do not apply.

Declaration on the use of artificial intelligence. The authors declare that no generative artificial intelligence was used in the writing or creation of the content of this manuscript.