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HISTORY OF OPHTHALMOLOGY IN MEXICO

The scientific meetings and congresses of the Mexican Society of Ophthalmology

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Several years after the Ophthalmological Society of Mexico was formed, and on the initiative of Dr Manuel Uribe y Troncoso, a meeting was organised for the ophthalmologists and doctors from across the country who were interested in ophthalmology. This 1st meeting took place in Mexico City from 27 to 31 March 1903. The president of the meeting was Dr Lorenzo Chávez, the then president of the Mexican Ophthalmological Society. In his opening address, Chávez recounted the history of Mexican ophthalmology. He also pointed out that that meeting was the first National Ophthalmological Congress and that the Ophthalmological Society was the first to hold a national congress. Some of the works presented were as follows: "Comparative value of the diverse optometric scales, need for unifications and adoption of a metric unit of measurement", "The composition of the aqueous humour in senile cataract", "The need for an international committee to determine the exact hues of colours that should be used in the colour signals", and "Ophthalmological Statistics". Doctors from several cities around the country, and even from the United States and El Salvador, attended (Fig. 1).

From that moment on, Mexico City was the main destination for meetings and congresses.

The 2nd Meeting of the Mexican Ophthalmological Society took place two years later, from 2 to 6 May 1905 in Mexico City. The venue was the hall of the Academy of Medicine located in the National School of Medicine. The president was Dr Manuel Uribe Troncoso. At that time the Society had 3 honorary members, 8 founding members, 11 full members, 22 national corresponding members, 9 members associated

with the annual meetings and 10 foreign corresponding members. The official presentations, as well as the free discussions, covered diverse topics, from cataracts and the lacrimal system to trauma. This meeting was attended by Dr Juan Santos Fernández from Cuba who, along with Dr Menacho, a renowned Spanish ophthalmologist, founded the *Archivos Hispanoamericanos de Oftalmología* [Hispano-American Archives of Ophthalmology], Dr H.M. Fish from New Orleans was also in attendance.

Dr José Ramos was the president of the 3rd Meeting, which took place 2 years after the previous one, in Mexico City from 17 to 21 September 1907. Ophthalmologists from across the country attended, which ran smoothly and fulfilled the formal aspects of the meeting.

The 4th Meeting took place jointly with the IV National Medical Congress in Mexico City from 19 to 25 September 1910, as part of the festivities for the First Centenary of Independence; on that occasion the president was Dr Emilio Montañón. As part of the official presentations, Dr José de Jesús González presented an extensive work on optic neuritis and its treatment.

For the first four meetings or congresses of the Mexican Ophthalmological Society, the respective proceedings were formally published.

The Revolution prevented the annual meetings from continuing to do so. The monthly sessions in Mexico City were carried out on an irregular basis. Between 1910 and 1917, the academic activities were seriously affected by the critical situation engulfing the country.

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As the situation in the country improved, the conditions arose to hold the 5th Annual Meeting, from 9 to 16 April 1918, together with the 5th National Medical Congress. For the first time it was hosted by a provincial city, Puebla. The presidency fell to Dr Fernando López. Fifteen works were presented, six of them by Dr José de Jesús González, an ophthalmologist who practiced in the city of León, including: "Three clinical notes on exuberant keratoconjunctivitis"; "Eye complications from Mexican typhus or Murine typhus"; "Transient and recurring enophthalmia of sympathetic origin". Other highly important presentations discussed the necessary measures to decrease the frequency of blindness in Mexico: the decision was made to create a Committee for the Prevention of Blindness in Mexico City, and affiliates in some provincial cities, as well as making Credé's method mandatory given that neonatal conjunctivitis was the leading cause of blindness in the country.

In 1920, the Mexican Society of Ophthalmology and Otorhinolaryngology was formed, since some doctors practiced both specialties. The 6th Annual Meeting took place in the same year in Toluca, again jointly with the 6th National Medical Congress, from 14 to 21 April. In this meeting, Dr José de Jesús González presented an interesting study: "Ophthalmological features of the fundus of the eye in some vertebrates".

The 7th Annual Meeting was chaired by Dr Vélez and took place in Saltillo from 24 to 30 September 1922, again jointly with the 7th National Medical Congress. Nineteen works were presented in the ophthalmology section, eleven of them by Dr José de Jesús González and two by Dr Torres Estrada. Dr González presented the work "Iconography of ocular leprosy", a text for which he was awarded a prize and a silver medal.

There are no records of annual meetings or congresses from 1922 to 1930, the year in which the First Mexican Congress for the Prevention of Blindness was held, in Mexico City. Dr Daniel M. Vélez was the president and the Mexican Society of Ophthalmology and Otorhinolaryngology actively helped to organise the event together with other institutions. It was held from 1 to 6 November in the National Academy of Medicine, located in the National School of Medicine. The aim of the Congress was to seek support from several institutions and associations to prevent blindness. This would be done on the basis of experience and the studies conducted by the country's ophthalmologists and ophthalmological societies on the main causes of blindness and eye diseases. Some of the important points from this Congress were that they established the need for practical teaching about ophthalmology in the medical schools and, in particular, neonatal conjunctivitis.

In 1946, the ophthalmologists and otorhinolaryngologists decided to separate and this gave rise to the foundation of the Mexican Society of Ophthalmology. Once newly gathered, the ophthalmologists decided to hold a congress. This happened three years later.

The First Mexican Congress of Ophthalmology brought together ophthalmologists from across the country. It was held in the Mexico City Faculty of Medicine from 9 to 16 January 1949. The Congress was organised by Dr Feliciano Palomino Dena along with Dr Lino Vergara Espino, president of the Congress.

The national congresses were organised and overseen by the members of the Mexican Society of Ophthalmology. The president of the congress generally belongs to the local society of the host city and the current president of the Mexican Society of Ophthalmology is the honorary president of the congress. The activities are organised by different committees, with the scientific programme committee standing out for its importance since it is tasked with designing the academic programme and sending out the corresponding invitations. Other committees are responsible for the cultural activities and the events together with the industry. The congresses are currently held regularly every 2 years, although at one time they were held every year.

In 1952, from 6 to 12 January, the 4th Pan-American Congress of Ophthalmology was held in Mexico City, with Dr Antonio Torres Estrada serving as president. The Pan-American Association of Ophthalmology (PAAO), together with the Mexican Society of Ophthalmology, assumed responsibility for organising the Congress, attended by ophthalmologists from the entire American continent. Dr Luis Sánchez Bulnes was the temporary president in 1971 and Dr Feliciano Palomino Dena held the presidency of the PAAO from 1977 to 1979. Dr Francisco Martínez Castro held the post of executive director for several years.

The 2nd Mexican Congress of Ophthalmology was held in Guadalajara in 1954 and the president was Dr Mendoza González. Subsequently the following congresses were held: in 1956 the 3rd Congress was held in San Luis Potosí, the president was Dr Salvado Nava; the 4th Congress was in the city of Monterrey, Nuevo León in 1958 and the president was Miguel Ángel Gutiérrez Zambrano; the host city for the 5th congress was Mérida, Yucatán in 1960, Antonio Cabrera Rodríguez and Efraín Acosta were presidents; the 6th Congress was in the city of Torreón in 1962, Arturo Gallegos Ábrego was the president; the 7th Congress was in Hermosillo, Sonora in April 1964, the president was Dr León Escobosa; the 8th Congress was in the city of Oaxaca in March 1966, with Alberto E. Narváez and Francisco Arenas Bolaños as co-presidents; the 9th Congress was held in the city of Guanajuato in May 1968, Francisco Javier Alvarado Arreguín held the presidency.

The 21st World Ophthalmology Congress took place in 1970; the first time it had been held in Latin America. The congress is considered to be the oldest medical congress and is organised by the International Council of Ophthalmology. The aim of this congress is to contribute to the progress of ophthalmology and provide a chance for personal encounters and discussions to those interested in this science. The host was Mexico City, affected by the events that took place in Tlatelolco in 1968.

The Congress took place from 8 to 14 March and the events were mostly held in the Conference Centre of the National Medical Centre of the Mexican Social Security Institute. The Congress' opening ceremony was conducted by the president of Mexico on 8 March, one day after a total solar eclipse. The presidency of the Congress was held by Dr Magin Puig Solanes. In his opening address he spoke about the danger of specialisation in Medicine, since this causes medicine to become fragmented and disintegrated in practice and in knowledge; he also mentioned that to reach true transcendence in the Congress, it should be universal in its ideology and in its conduct.

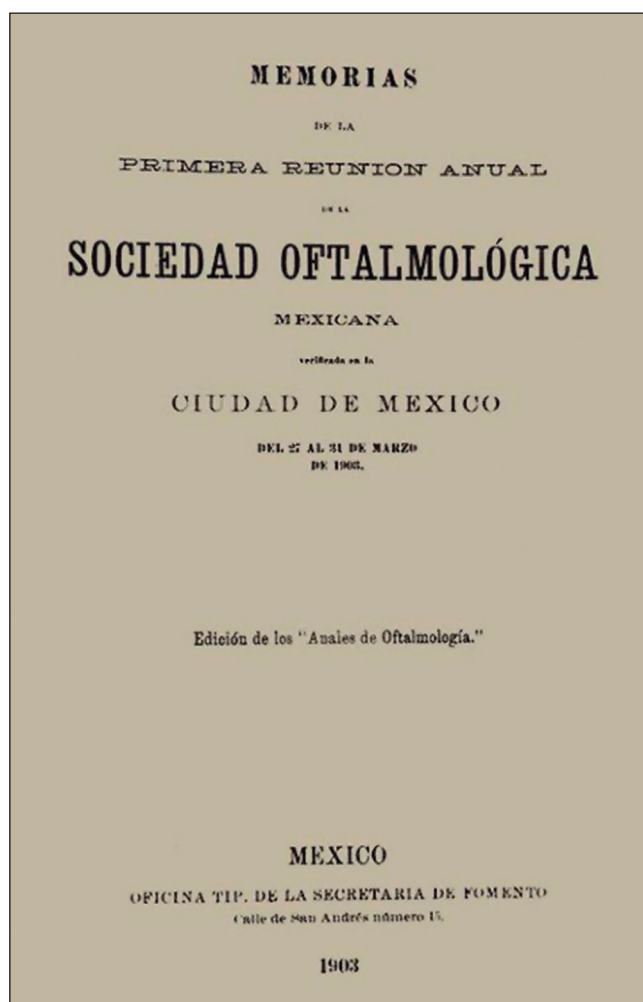


Figure 1 Proceedings of the first Annual Meeting of the Ophthalmologic Mexican Society.

The "J. Gonin" medal was awarded to Dr Meyer-Schwickerath for his work on retinal photocoagulation. The scientific programme spanned several areas: the two main topics were "Pathology of the Occipital Lobe" and "Ocular Embryopathies" presented in plenary sessions. Other topics covered were "Recent Concepts on the Diagnosis and Treatment of Glaucoma", "Current Problems in Childhood Ophthalmology", "Cryosurgery in Ophthalmology", "Macular Diseases", "Recent Histological and Histopathological Acquisitions through Electronic Microscopy". 275 free works and scientific films were presented. In the special sessions there was a meeting of the International League against Trachoma, a major cause of blindness. The first prize for scientific presentation was awarded to the work "Cataracts and Dislocated lenses". There were 2,737 attendees from 75 countries. At the administrative meeting of the International Council of Ophthalmology it was decided that the next congress would be in Paris.

In March 1971, the 10th Congress was held in the city of Guadalajara, Jalisco, and the president was Eugenio Chávez Anaya. The 11th Congress was in the city of Mazatlán, from 29 April to 3 May 1973, presided by Dr Ignacio Sánchez Alarcón.

In 1974, Mexico City hosted the 4th Latin American Congress of Strabismus from 12 to 16 May. Dr David Romero Apis was the president, backed by all the strabismus specialists in the country.

The following congresses in 1975, 1977, and 1979 were held in Mexicali, Baja California, Morelia, Michoacán, and Veracruz, respectively.

The 13th Pan-American Congress of Ophthalmology was again held in Mexico in 1981. The host city was Acapulco, from 10 to 15 May. Dr David Gutiérrez Pérez was the president. Before the Congress, a meeting on eye pathology directed by Dr Sadí de Buen was held in Mexico City on 8 and 9 May.

The 15th Congress was held in Querétaro, Querétaro, from 2 to 7 May 1982. The president was Dr Gil Villanueva Díaz. The following congresses were held in 1984 in Chihuahua, 1986 in Puebla, 1988 in Tampico and 1990 in Acapulco.

In 1993 the first centenary of the foundation of the Mexican Society of Ophthalmology was commemorated and a special congress was held in Mexico City from 14 to 18 February. The event brought together a great number of Mexican ophthalmologists coming from the furthest cities in the country. Months later, in early 1994, the rebellion in Chiapas started.

The 21st Pan-American Congress was held in Cancun from 1 to 7 May 1997. Pan-Americanism was expressed with full intensity in the Caribbean waters with the PAAO leaders in attendance.

Several cities received all the country's ophthalmologists with much enthusiasm and hospitality, such as León, Guanajuato, in 1998, with Dr Mario Ontiveros as president.

The Congresses took place regularly but were not without their problems. Since not all the cities had the necessary infrastructure, it was decided that the hosts would be Mexico City, Monterrey, Guadalajara and Cancun, which caused a certain amount of unrest for some ophthalmologists.

In 2007, another Pan-American congress took place in the city of Cancun, again with great success. The ophthalmologists came from throughout America: Canada, United States of America, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Chile, Argentina and many other countries.

In 2012 and 2014 the congresses were held, respectively, in Cancun and Guadalajara, which was preparing for the next World Congress.

Now we are here, in 2016, in the city of Guadalajara, at the World Ophthalmology Congress, WOC2016, with great expectations and great hospitality, together with ophthalmologists from around the world. Once again, the Mexican Society of Ophthalmology and the Pan-American Association of Ophthalmology, along with the International Council of Ophthalmology, are united in this great Congress. The Congress is chaired by Dr Enrique Graue Wichers, who is also the current dean of our leading academic institution: the National Autonomous University of Mexico.

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