



# Actas Urológicas Españolas

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## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Evidence-based defense of case reports in urology<sup>☆</sup>

#### Defensa basada en la evidencia de los casos clínicos en Urología

Dear Mr. Director,

The latest changes in the editorial line of *Actas Urológicas Españolas* eliminated the possibility of publishing case reports in the Journal. The principles of evidence-based medicine, which place descriptive case series in the lower level of the hierarchy of scientific evidence, well below randomized clinical trials, systematic reviews, and cohort studies, exclude clinical cases of this alleged paradigm of scientific truth (see: The Oxford 2011 Levels of evidence. Available at: [www.cebm.net/](http://www.cebm.net/)). However, clinical cases have always been one of the best reflections of medical and surgical practice at each time, showing better than other studies, or at least in a more simple and didactic way, the process of decision making for a patient with specific clinical symptoms. As in all specialties, urological clinical cases are important to spread the best current practice and contribute to its progress; they make it possible to generate new hypotheses or contradict previously existing ones; and they are used to describe diseases or new disease associations (the most recent and known case in general medicine is AIDS) and to report the adverse effects of treatments or interventions.<sup>1</sup>

Recent literature is full of examples of how clinical cases sometimes lead to significant advances in the understanding of some diseases, especially the least frequent, in the understanding of the mechanisms of becoming ill, in the development of new techniques, and in the knowledge of medical and surgical complications.<sup>2,3</sup> The latter is of the utmost importance in a time when minimally invasive, laparoscopic, and robotic surgeries are changing the surgical specialties completely, and new tools and technical variants with potential complications and little known commitments for patients' safety are described every day.

If it were true that only what we have seen is recognized, and we rarely remember what we have read, the reading of cases with particular teachings is one of the best lessons to try to avoid repeating mistakes. The bibliography contains numerous other specific reasons for the surgery, in order to continue publishing interesting single case reports and case series, particularly when trying to evaluate new technologies.<sup>3</sup>

As a reflection which I consider right, this rejection of urological clinical cases coincides with the launch – by the publisher responsible for the edition of *Actas Urológicas Españolas* – of the journal, *Elsevier Medical Case Reports*, with the striking slogan "State your case. You can change the medicine of the future", which will be devoted to publishing case reports focused on gathering information on (in the words of the publisher) "new, rare diseases or the uncommon association of diseases and symptoms; diagnostic techniques, treatments, and new drugs; interactions and adverse or unexpected effects of interventions or drugs, new interpretations of the mechanisms of becoming ill and the confirmation of important clinical lessons" ([www.elseviermedicalcasereports.com/](http://www.elseviermedicalcasereports.com/)). Quite a statement that summarizes the value of medical knowledge wherein clinical cases involve.

## References

1. Vandenbroucke JP. Case reports in an evidence-based world. *J R Soc Med.* 1999;92:159–63.
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3. Jenicek M. Clinical case reports and case series research in evaluating surgery. Part II. The content and form: uses of single clinical case reports and case series research in surgical specialties. *Med Sci Monit.* 2008;14:RA149–62.

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