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EDITORIAL ARTICLE

Activity of Spanish Journal of Legal Medicine in 2019–2020[☆]

Actividad de *Revista Española de Medicina Legal* en 2019–2020

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Comité editorial de Revista Española de Medicina Legal, Spain

2018 saw the tenth anniversary of when a group of forensic doctors, headed by Dr. Francisco Pera, formed the board of directors of the National Association of Forensic Doctors (ANMF) and recommended the publication of the REVISTA ESPAÑOLA DE MEDICINA LEGAL (REML), asking the prestigious international biomedical publisher Elsevier¹ to take charge of publication. Now that the REML is approaching its 50th year of existence, which started in 1974, the project may be considered consolidated.

As happened on previous occasions, the REML editorial team offered its readers a description of its work over the last two years, which were indisputably dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic. As the REML is the benchmark Spanish language journal for the biomedical-legal sciences, at the start of April 2020 the editorial committee decided to publish a monographic edition on the medical-legal aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic.² The papers in this monographic edition were immediately made available in open access in the *ScienceDirect* database and the REML website, firstly in their postprint (accepted) version and then in their defini-

tive (published) version. Elsevier España prioritised the publication of papers on COVID-19 and created a COVID-19 resources page (<https://www.elsevier.es/es-coronavirus>) which brought together all of the published resources with open access to papers in subscription journals. Other similar international initiatives were the 'Public Health Emergency COVID-19 Initiative'³ which created immediate access to publications on COVID-19 and coronavirus in PubMed Central (PMC) and other public databases, together with their available supporting data. This initiative made the Spanish and English contents of the REML monographic edition available in PMC.

All of the above factors influenced the excellent results obtained by the REML in 2020, with 247,000 visits to its website, setting a new record number of visits with a 50.2% increase over 2017. Likewise, in Science Direct it achieved almost 300,000 visits, due no doubt to the pandemic but also the English version of the REML. For a journal such as the REML, which covers a highly specific field of knowledge, achieving 543,000 visits is both a reason for satisfaction and a sign of the good scientific health of the journal. Another surprising datum is that the first country in terms of its corresponding percentage of visits to the website in 2020 was the United States (24.2%), slightly above Spain (23%) and followed by México (17.6%). This is the first time that Spain has not been the first country in terms of the percentage of visits. There is no doubt that this too was aided by the English version of REML contents (editorials, original papers and reviews) which commenced publication in 2016.⁴

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Table 1 Reviewers of the REVISTA ESPAÑOLA DE MEDICINA LEGAL during 2018–2020.

Carlos Aibar, Guillermo Alcalde, María Sandra Alfageme Redondo, Antonio Alonso, Cristina Amaya, Antonio Andrés Pueyo, José Manuel Arredondo, Laura Fátima Asensi Pérez, Youcef Azeli, Rafael M. Bañón, Eneko Barbería, Pedro A. Barrio Caballero, Cristina María Beltrán-Aroca, María Benito Sanchez, Ana M. Bermejo, José Blanco-Pampín, Juan Carlos Borondo Alcázar, Miguel Cecilio Botella Lopez, María Dolores Braquehais, Pol Bruguera, Renzo Felipe Carranza Esteban, María Casado, Mariano Casado Blanco, Juan de Dios Casas Sánchez, Lawrence Chacón, Andrés Combalía, Pablo Coste Murillo, Manuel Crespillo Márquez, Santiago Crespo, Angelines Cruz, Eugenia Cunha, Ángel Cuquerella Fuentes, Kosik-Bogacka Danuta, Juan Gabriel de la Cruz, Cristian de Quintana-Schmidt, Inés del Río Pastoriza, Edgardo Delgado Ramos, Jordi Desola, Enrique Dorado, Larissa Dutra Bittencourt Oliveira, Enrique Echeburúa, Jorge Fernández del Valle, Rafael Fernández García-Andrade, Esther Fernández Molina, Amparo Fernández-Rodríguez, Gabriel M. Fonseca, Pedro Manuel Garamendi González, Óscar García, Ruth García, Rosana María Gerometta, Dolors Giménez, Juan Giner, Lucas Giner, Eloy Girela, María Jesús Goicoechea, Esperanza Luisa Gómez Durán, Jorge González Fernández, Juan Antonio González García, Marta Grijalba Mazo, Julio Antonio Guija Villa, María Inês Guimarães, Esperanza Gutiérrez-Redomero, Ángel Hernández Gil, Ana Isabel Hernández Guerra, Carlos Iniesta, Julio Irigoyen, M. Isorna, Amaia Jamijyan Briz, Inés Landín, Serafín Lemos, María de la Paz Lloria García, Ismael Loinaz, Manuel J. López Baroni, Jordi López Miquel, Manuel López-Rivadulla, Jose A. Lorente, Gabriel Martí Agustí, José Amador Martínez, María Antonia Martínez, Carles Martin-Fumadó, Jordi Medallo, Arch Mila, Pilar Molina, Benito Morentin, Noemi Morte, Valeriano Muñoz, Dominika Nociarová, Ana Isabel Ortega-Pertuz, José Vicente Pachar Lucio, María Neus Panyella Carbó, Francisco Pera, Bernardo Perea Pérez, María D. Pérez-Cárceles, Óscar J. Pozo, Héctor Rangel-Villalobos, Carlos Represas, María Ribas Siñol, Noemí Rivaldería, Cristián Rocco, Hugo Rodríguez-Almada, Manuel Salguero, Juan Salvat Puig, José Antonio Sánchez-Sánchez, Manuel Sancho, Andrés Santiago-Sáez, Ignacio Santos Amaya, Ana Santurtún, Fernando Serrulla, Agustín Sibón, Juan José Sirvent, Virginia Soldino, María Luisa Soria, M. Paz Suárez-Mier, Susana Subirà, Josep M. Suelves, Carlos Suso-Ribera, Aurora Valenzuela, Gloria Vallejo, Maikel Vargas Sanabria, Clara Vega, Jordi Vicens-Vilanova, Jordi Vilardell and Marta Vizcaíno Rakosnik.

The open access to the contents of the monograph on COVID-19 had a positive influence on these excellent results. Respecting the editorial policies of open access and forms of publication, access to REML contents is not open but is rather restricted to subscribers to the journal. We would therefore like to remind the members of the ANMF that they enjoy free, immediate and permanent access to all REML contents from the user zone of the webpage (<https://www.anmf-reml.es/>). Nevertheless, to allow open access it is possible to deposit preprint versions (sent manuscripts) and postprint versions (accepted manuscripts) in the institutional repositories after an embargo period of 12 months. From now on it is also possible for those authors who so wish to pay the fee denominated the article processing charge (APC), so that the final version of their paper (accepted, laid out and with an identifier) will immediately be offered in open access form.

Moreover, the enthusiastic reception of the editorial on the speciality of Legal and Forensic Medicine (MLF)⁵ also strongly influenced the good results in 2020. This was prepared by the National Commission of the Speciality and the members of the Forensic Medicine Council. The hoped-for publication of Royal Decree 704/2020, of 28 July, which established access to the qualification of MLF doctor/specialist based on the internship system,⁶ was the end of a long road. It made the speciality in MLF equal to other medical specialities after it had virtually been abolished by the seventh additional Regulation of Royal Decree 639/2014, of 25 July,⁷ and it fulfilled the condition set in article 475 of Organic Law 6/1985, of 1 July, on Judicial Power, in the 2015 version, which stipulated that access to the Forensic Doctors Corps was conditional on holding the official qualification of a Degree in Medicine and as a forensic medicine specialist.⁸

82 manuscripts were received in 2020. Excluding editorials, the percentage of rejected works amounted to 57.2%. The types of papers with the highest percentages of rejection were short originals and originals (85.7% and 77.7%, respectively), while those with the lowest percentages of rejection were those on practical forensic medicine (33.3%). In comparison with the 3 papers by foreign authors published in 2014–2015,⁴ 13 papers by foreign authors were published in 2019–2020. Mexico was the first country of origin with 3 papers, while Chile was second with 2 and authors from Germany, Argentina, Colombia, Italy, Panama, Peru, the United Kingdom and Venezuela published one paper each.

In 2021 the REML plans to request inclusion in Medline again. Although we are aware of the difficulty this represents, it is a priority objective for the editorial team. Medline is highly exacting regarding content, most particularly regarding a minimum number of original papers, and this aspect will be taken into account by the editorial committee when selecting the contents of the REML. Additionally, the recommendations of the last report received from the Literature Selection Technical Review Committee on REML have been implemented. This report underlined that the strong point of the REML is the excellent peer reviewing which is applied. It also recommended that we apply extremely rigorous ethical standards, according to current needs and demands, adjusting aspects such as the authorship criteria or those governing conflicts of interest. It also encouraged us to continue upholding the quality of the journal, and due to this the publication criteria were renewed in 2018.¹

We have to remember and recognise that without the work, dedication and generous effort of the reviewers (see Table 1) the REML would not be possible. We would therefore like to thank them especially for their work, which is of great help in decision-making by the editorial committee.

We would finally like to thank the readers and authors for their participation, without which the REML would not exist.

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