



Special Article

SEPAR Year 2007. A year for Smoking Prevention and Treatment

Año SEPAR 2007. Año para la prevención y el tratamiento del tabaquismo

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Introduction

During the year 2007, the Spanish Society of Pneumology and Thoracic Surgery (SEPAR in Spanish) and the Respira Foundation celebrated the SEPAR Year 2007 for Smoking Prevention and Treatment.¹ This event was framed within the SEPAR years context that this scientific society carries out yearly. Throughout the article we will present the objectives and activities that took place during said year. We will place special emphasis on the extensive scientific production that the Spanish pulmonologists and thoracic surgeons have developed concerning this discipline

Objectives

The SEPAR Year 2007 for Smoking Prevention and Treatment fulfilled 3 important objectives: *a)* increase the awareness of the general Spanish population regarding smoking prevention and control; *b)* collaborate with other Spanish institutions -health-political, scientific, public and private- in the global control of smoking in our country, and *c)* promote the role of pneumology and thoracic surgery in this discipline.

Social Activities

The SEPAR Year 2007 for Smoking Prevention and Treatment that was carried out with the honourable presidency of Her Royal Highness, the Princess of Asturias, celebrated its inauguration ceremony on 23 January, 2007. Numerous personalities from the culture and health worlds were present at the ceremony. During the act, the primary messages that were divulged during the year were presented. Among them, we must point out: *a)* keeping youth from starting to smoke is the creation of health; *b)* smoking is a chronic

illness; *c)* to stop smoking is the healthiest decision that a smoker can take in his/her entire life; *d)* it is possible to stop smoking; *e)* there are safe and effective medical treatments to help smokers to stop smoking; *f)* if you want to stop smoking, visit your pulmonologist, he/she can help you, and *g)* as pulmonologists, we are health professionals specialised in the treatment of smoking. All of these messages were divulged in all of the public activities that were celebrated during said year, for which we counted on the voluntary collaboration of 12 social leaders of the world of fashion, radio, television, cinema, sports, etc.: Isabel Coixet, Pedro Piqueras, Gomaespuma, Patricia Conde, David Meca, Alvaro Bultó, Juan Imedio, Paula Vázquez, Bartolomé Beltrán, Ernesto Sáenz de Buruaga, Natalia Sánchez and Fernando Sánchez Dragó. Each one of them lent their image to a certain month of the year to launch our messages in favour of smoking prevention and treatment. We also carried out an itinerant campaign using a large 18 meter long semi-truck that drove all around the Spanish territory for 45 days, visiting a total of 36 Spanish cities. In all of said cities, we spread our messages by passing out informative pamphlets, triptychs and calendars, and by projecting a movie in 3D².

Scientific Activities

The scientific activities on smoking prevention and treatment that were carried out during the year were numerous and varied. It must be kept in mind that, in recent years, Spanish pulmonologists and thoracic surgeons have carried out a key role in different aspects related with the treatment of smoking in our country. They were the first ones to give scientific recommendations based on evidence about the treatment of smoking.^{3,4} In addition to this, they exercised indisputable leadership in obtaining the consensus document on the diagnosis and treatment of smoking, that was endorsed by the most important scientific societies involved in this discipline: SEPAR, Spanish Society of Family and Community Medicine (*semFYC* in Spanish), Spanish Society of Primary Care Physicians (*SEMERGEN* in Spanish) and the Spanish Society of Smoking Specialists (*SEDET* in Spanish).⁵

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The celebration of the SEPAR Year 2007 has helped to consolidate, and even intensify, this position. On one hand, serious studies have been carried out to determine the effectiveness of the different therapeutic interventions used on smokers.⁶⁻¹⁰ On the other hand, the latest recommendations of the SEPAR have been published regarding the treatment of smoking.¹¹ This new recommendations document provides certain innovations. Without a doubt, the most important one presents a proposal on behalf of the public health system to finance the pharmacological treatments used to stop smoking. It is a proposal that is scientific, coherent, universal, attainable and based in criteria of scientific evidence that enables the public financing of these types of treatment. The excellent cost/benefit relationship that all the forms of pharmacological smoking treatment follow out is well known.^{12,13} These new recommendations of the SEPAR have worked to elevate, formally, a proposal for their financing to the Spanish health-political authorities.

Two important scientific studies were carried out during the year. In 2005, before the approval of the law of health measures to control smoking, SEPAR carried out a representative national survey in which the prevalence and attitudes regarding passive smoking were researched in Spanish society.¹⁴ The law was approved and implemented throughout the national territory during 2006.¹⁵ In 2007, just one year after the law was implemented, taking advantage of the celebration of the SEPAR Year, the survey was repeated. In this manner, SEPAR was converted into the only Spanish scientific society that possessed reliable data on the impact that the law had had in the general Spanish population. A total of 6,533 Spanish people were surveyed in the first survey, carried out in 2005,¹⁴ and in 2007, one year after the new law came into effect, a new analysis was carried out on a total of 3,907 Spanish people. The results showed: *a*) that the global exposure to air contaminated by tobacco smoke decreased from 49.5 to 37.9% (a 22% reduction); *b*) that the highest reductions were found in school environments, where exposure went from 29.7 to 8.8% (a 49.8% reduction), and in work environments, where exposure lowered from 25.8 to 11% (a 58.8% reduction), and *c*) that the least noticeable reductions were recorded in bars and recreational locals, where the decrease was only 8% (from 29.5 to 21.4%), and in homes, where it was 27% (from 29.5 to 21.4%).¹⁶

Passive smoking has become the third avoidable cause of death in Spain.¹⁷ Breathing air contaminated by tobacco smoke has been associated to suffering serious respiratory, cardiovascular and tumour illnesses.¹⁸⁻²² Passive smoking affects mostly the health of the weakest: foetuses, newborns, children and adolescents.²³⁻²⁵ The SEPAR Year 2007 wanted to make this information visible. To do so, they carried out a study in collaboration with the European Community, that has been carrying out different activities in 27 European countries for the last several years in order to increase awareness about smoking amongst all of its citizens. It is a campaign called "HELP, for a life without tobacco". In 2007, the results of the CO-mets study were presented, which is one of the studies that this campaign has been carrying out. The SEPAR Year 2007 for Smoking Prevention and Treatment collaborated in this activity. The study analysed the results of 111,835 co-oxymetries carried out in 27 European countries. Of these co-oxymetries, 62,433 corresponded to smokers and 49,392 to non-smokers. The results were as follows:

1. The average value of carbon monoxide (CO) in exhaled air of non-exposed non-smokers was 3.9ppm, while that of exposed non-smokers was 8ppm and for smokers, 17.5ppm.

2. In countries where the legislative control of smoking in public places is high, the value of CO among non-exposed non-smokers is 2.5 ppm (that is, 1.4ppm below the average), meanwhile in countries where there is no legislative control, the value is 5.2ppm, that is, 2.7 ppm above the average. Similar differences were observed when comparing countries where the prices of the tobacco labours were cheap with those where they were expensive.

3. It was found that non-smoking exposed males had a greater risk of developing cardiovascular illnesses than non-exposed non-smokers.

It is deduced from this data that the primary source of contamination by CO in humans is not smoke from automobile motors or from heaters or industries, but the exposure to air that is contaminated by environmental smoke from tobacco.

The IBERPOC study was the first scientific study that determined the prevalence of the chronic obstructive pulmonary disease in Spain.²⁶ It has become a key and pioneer study among those carried out by SEPAR. The celebration of the SEPAR Year 2007 made possible the divulgation of many of its conclusions. In recent years, new analysis have been done on the prevalence and the clinical characteristics of this process that have only helped to confirm the great health repercussions that this illness continues to have on our society.²⁷⁻²⁹

Scientific Impact

Keeping in mind all of this scientific activity, there is no doubt that the celebration of the SEPAR Year 2007 led to great advancing for the scientific impact that SEPAR has regarding smoking. However, we cannot forget all that it took to get to this point. The scientific production from the Smoking Area of our scientific society has been very intense and important in recent years, and it would be tedious to number the publications that have been realised by its members. In order to ratify and debate this affirmation, we can refer to the study by González Alcaide et al.³⁰ It is a review where a group of bibliometric studies from the University of Valencia, one of the most prestigious universities of Spain and completely separated from SEPAR, concludes that the 2 most productive authors during the period from 1999-2004 regarding addictions (not only referring to tobacco) have been 2 Spanish pulmonologists that belong to the Smoking Area of SEPAR. In addition, this same group concluded that the group of Spanish pulmonologists integrated in the Smoking Area formed the primary Spanish network of collaboration in research about smoking between the years 1999 and 2003.³¹ Not in vain, in another study it was found that in that same period, Spain had contributed with 8.34% of the scientific production in this discipline in the Science Citation Index.³²

Social Impact

During the year, not only were there scientific activities being carried out, but there was also time to launch activities of social divulgation. For their development, we had the collaboration of other medical-scientific societies and associations of patients. One example of this type of activities was the elaboration of the "Consensus document regarding smoking prevention and treatment", where we worked in collaboration with 2 medical societies -SEPAR, representing the specialised medical societies, and SEMERGEN, representing primary care societies- and 4 associations of patients³³: the Spanish Federation of Laryngectomised Persons and Associations without Smoke (FLEASH in Spanish), the Spanish Association of Patients with COPD and Other Chronic Respiratory Pathologies (AEPOC in Spanish), the Association of Coronary Patients (APACOR in Spanish) and the Coalition of Patients with Chronic Diseases. This group of associations of patients represents more than 2 million people affected by chronic diseases and/or those associated with smoking. The document covers in a clear, concise and explicative manner, the different aspects related with the epidemiology, the pathology and the treatment of smoking. Finally, a Decalogue is presented for smoking prevention and treatment, where its 10 points clearly deliver the messages of the SEPAR Year 2007. 10,000 copies of the document were edited, that were distributed among the societies and associations that participated in its creation. All of the members of SEPAR also received a copy sent to their homes.

The celebration of the SEPAR Years not only leads to an increase in the production and of the scientific activities concerning the chosen topic. They also work to increase the awareness and knowledge of the general population in all aspects related with the topic. In this respect, the SEPAR Year 2007 had great impact in the social media. We have assessed the number of impacts that our campaign had in the Spanish general population, using only those attributed to appearances in television and written press, and ignoring the rest of the media. The appearances in television produced 36,435,678 impacts and those from the written press produced 37,807,975. These values throw out a total of 74,243,653 impacts. This value is important if you take into account, also, that it only includes television appearances and those in written press, and it does not include those that were produced in the radio or in digital media.³³

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