

## The Canadian-Mexican Joint Congress 2006: MCR President Carlos Pineda Extends a Warm *Bienvenida* to Canada

### *When and how was the Mexican College of Rheumatology (MCR) founded?*

The lineage of our organization is related to cardiology. Back in 1939, a group of young and visionary cardiologists, who were handling the virulent epidemic of rheumatic fever, founded the Mexican League Against Rheumatism.

The first rheumatology department in our country was founded in 1944, also within a cardiology-based hospital (*Instituto Nacional de Cardiología*), and headed by Dr. Javier Robles Gil who was the pioneer in Mexican rheumatology.

In 1959, the League was reorganized and the new executive committee, comprised mainly of rheumatologists, took its first action: to transform the Mexican League Against Rheumatism into the Mexican Society of Rheumatology. The Mexican Society of Rheumatology was officially established in 1963 and had 48 members. Since then, the organization has met on a monthly basis (the last Tuesday of each month).

In October 2002, the Mexican Society of Rheumatology was transformed into the Mexican College of Rheumatology (MCR), extending its duties not only to rheumatologists but to rheumatic patients as well.

Our corporate emblem depicts an ancient Mexican motif, which is also related to our specialty. As described by an ancient codex, the feathered serpent Quetzalcoatl was one of the most prominent gods of Mesoamerica and was invoked to heal rheumatic pain.

### *What are the current activities of the Mexican College of Rheumatology (MCR)?*

The current activities of the MCR are linked to our mission statement: the MCR is an organization of health professionals in quest of academic excellence and leadership through programs of continuous self-improvement and medical education that foster excellence in the care of rheumatic patients and their environment, working within the framework of an ethical code.



Currently, we have a monthly academic meeting which is based in Mexico City; the meeting is transmitted via satellite to 12 major cities around our country. The audience is comprised largely of MCR members, although internists, orthopedic surgeons, and a minority of family doctors and general practitioners also attend the meeting. The academic topics are always related to the fields of rheumatology and immunology.

In terms of continuing medical education, we run a nation-wide program called *Promedica reumatologica* which strives to educate and update clinicians involved in the care of patients with arthritis with respect to recent advances in the diagnosis, management and treatment of rheumatic diseases. This activity is accredited by the general practitioners' council, the Mexican College of Internal Medicine, PANLAR and several state universities.

The MCR also has a bi-monthly rheumatology journal called *Revista Mexicana de Reumatología* which is the official medical journal of our organization. This journal will soon be fused with its Spanish counterpart and will be renamed *Reumatología Clínica*. This new journal is intended to be the official scientific journal of both the MCR and the Spanish Society of Rheumatology. The official language of this conjoint bimonthly journal will be Spanish, however, an English-language summary is being contemplated. Furthermore, in the near future, English-language manuscripts will be welcomed.

The MCR also edits a Bulletin, which is the official publication for communication with our membership.

### *What are the current challenges for Mexican rheumatology? What are the goals of the Mexican College of Rheumatology (MCR) for the next decade?*

Among our long- and short-range plans, the main goals of the MCR include:

- To enhance public awareness on rheumatic diseases and the role of rheumatologists;
- For Mexican rheumatologists to be appropriately

recognized and utilized by the Mexican governmental health institutions as the premiere managers and providers of care for people with arthritis, rheumatism and musculoskeletal (MSK) diseases;

- To attract professionals of the highest quality into research, education and the care of people with arthritis, rheumatism and MSK diseases;
- To promote collaborative, international, clinical and basic research and teaching activities in arthritis, rheumatism and MSK diseases;
- To improve the effectiveness and intensity of College-wide communication, especially with members but also with rheumatic patients and their associations; and
- To maintain a strong annual scientific congress.

Our annual program or operational plan does not detail all the current and ongoing initiatives, programs, and activities the MCR will undertake in the course of serving its members and their respective fields.

*In Canada, there are ongoing problems in terms of a shortage of rheumatologists within the country as a whole and maldistribution of those rheumatologists who are here. Do similar issues exist in Mexico? What are the solutions to these problems?* In Mexico there are only 418 board-certified rheumatologists who tend to a population of more than 100 million inhabitants. We urgently need more rheumatologists to tend to the increasing number of patients and the effects of aging on the national prevalence of arthritis.

The Mexican College of Rheumatology's position and action plan for this problem includes:

- Improving the way rheumatology is taught/presented in medical schools;
- Improving the diagnostic and therapeutic skills of general practitioners and family doctors with respect to rheumatic diseases through continuing medical education programs;
- Influencing residency-training programs to include a standardized rheumatology curriculum; and
- Attracting doctors into research, education and the care of people with arthritis, rheumatism and musculoskeletal diseases.

Maldistribution of specialists is also an ongoing problem in Mexico. There is a higher concentration of rheumatologists in the large cities (e.g., Mexico City, Guadalajara) but, on the other hand, there are some smaller areas that do not have access to one, single rheumatologist. The hope for solving this situation and increasing the number of professionals in this field

involves increased promotion, particularly at our health institutions, of rheumatologists as the premiere managers and providers of care for people with arthritis, rheumatism and musculoskeletal diseases.

*The American College of Rheumatology (ACR) annual meeting attracts as many Canadian rheumatologists as Canada's own national meeting. Does the ACR meeting also attract a large number of Mexican rheumatologists? Has the Mexican College of Rheumatology (MCR) ever held any special meetings in conjunction with the ACR?*

The ACR meeting also attracts a large number of Mexican rheumatologists. Distinguished members of our college are invited as guest speakers, while others participate as poster presenters and others attend the meeting to keep updated. Mexican rheumatologists have participated as speakers in many different ACR settings, such as study groups, meet-the-professor sessions, PANLAR meetings and plenary sessions. To my knowledge, the ACR has never organized a special meeting in conjunction with the MCR.

*The granting body for clinical specialists in Canada (the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada) now enforces a mandatory number of hours of continuing medical education per year for rheumatologists (and the other specialties) to maintain their specialty certification. Do similar rules exist in Mexico?*

In Mexico the granting body for rheumatologists is the Mexican Council of Rheumatology and is the official authority with respect to the certification of doctors' knowledge and skills to practice rheumatology. The Mexican Council of Rheumatology enforces a recertification every five years. The recertification is obtained by means of a written exam or by academic achievements, scientific presentations, published articles, hours of continuing medical education (courses, meetings), teaching activities, etc.

*Continuing medical education (CME) and other activities of the Canadian Rheumatology Association (CRA) are largely dependent on revenue generated from pharmaceutical company sponsorship of our annual meeting. How does the Mexican College of Rheumatology (MCR) meet its budgetary requirements?*

Similar to the CRA, CME programs and other academic activities of the MCR are largely dependent on revenue

generated from pharmaceutical companies (*i.e.*, unrestricted educational grants). Another important source of income that helps us meet our budgetary requirements is the annual congress. Also, some profits are obtained from scientific activities registration, paid courses, accreditations, etc.

*Canadian rheumatologists are very honored and enthusiastic about the joint Mexican-Canadian meeting in early 2006. Do you have a message for the members of the Canadian Rheumatology Association (CRA)?*

The main objectives of the Mexican College of Rheumatology (MCR) for the joint Canadian-Mexican meeting are:

- To exchange academic experiences in a variety of rheumatologic areas;
- To establish a wide, strong and productive collaboration in education training and research developments;
- To become a model of PANLAR cooperation; and

- To have an opportunity to strengthen our academic relationships and fortify our friendship.

Dear Canadian colleagues:

The MCR is very honored and enthusiastic about the joint meeting in 2006. We hope that we can foster an even stronger relationship between our two organizations, which I am sure will be of mutual benefit.

On behalf of the MCR, I most cordially invite all the CRA members to enjoy Cancun. And I hope you will experience a unique, productive and unforgettable Canadian-Mexican meeting.

The MCR welcomes you.

– Carlos Pineda, MD  
President, Mexican College of Rheumatology



*Hadn't seen Peter in years. Didn't speak to me. Obviously he prefers blondes!*



*Carter the consummate politician on baby duty and Janet wishing he could breastfeed so she could go to the bar and have a few stiff ones.*



*We have a rheumatologist who is a bodybuilder??*