

Medical communication: history, stories and ABO

Comunicação médica: história, estórias e os ABO

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Communication is one of the most used tools in the practice of medicine. Interpersonal communication with patients and families; information to colleagues in the eye meetings or publications; or even communication with the public through the media on a large scale, either through conventional or electronic ways are part of the efficient medical work.

Many ophthalmologists contributed to disseminate and advance knowledge by written communication, not just by their genuine observations, but also combining it with the capacity (learned and exercised) to inform them along.

The ABO (*Arquivos Brasileiros de Oftalmologia*) has been for decades a repository of new observations and advances in ophthalmology. This is being supported by the continuous voluntary contribution of ophthalmologists and other professionals in communicate their observations.

Like other forms of communication, writing also has been changing over time. The findings in archaeological work, through the detailed observations in long journal articles of the era of the typewriter and mail letter, the current texts in concise and standard format (divided into five sessions: introduction, methodology, results, discussion and references), medical information arrives today to the interlocutor (patient, physician or other individual) via paper or the computer⁽¹⁾.

It is true that bibliometrics and papers diffusion mechanisms do not avoid some distortions on communication. As an example, we have the case of Manoel da Gama Lobo, the first doctor that exclusively served the specialty of ophthalmology in Brazil^(1,2). In 1865, he described the *Ophthalmia Braziliana*, a disease associated with malnutrition in children, which had among the signs: crying without tears, night blindness and led to death. The description of this disease involved 4 children and was certainly caused by severe deficiency of vitamin A. The article was published in two journals of good impact at the time, one in German and one in Portuguese (procedure acceptable at the time, but reprehensible in modern times), but very few ophthalmologists knows it, despite the availability of complete and free paper in the internet through Google Books⁽³⁻⁵⁾.

In the other hand, in 1930, Dr. Henrik Samuel Conrad Sjögren made the first description of a disease that includes dry eye, dry mouth and polyarthralgia. He named it *keratoconjunctivitis sicca*. His study was published, first in the form of a summary and three years later, the complete doctorate thesis, both in Swedish^(6,7). Interestingly, the study had some weak points, highly criticized nowadays. For example, it was a long text, with a cross-sectional study, with no intervention nor mention about the form of recruitment of cases and the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Several of the 19 women patient evaluated had no demographic data mentioned, not all the tests that substantiate the conclusions were performed in all patients. Even though, decades later, the problem gained worldwide attention. It has been studied in at least six specialties (ophthalmology, gastroenterology, pathology, head & neck surgery, rheumatology and dentistry). The term "Sjögren's syndrome" has more than 12,000 citations in PubMed, and more than 350 just in 2013.

Dr. Sjögren was not only recognized for his relevant contribution, the eponymous "Sjögren's syndrome" is probably the most widely used in current medical communication. Many ophthalmologists use it (incorrectly) as a synonym for dry eye⁽⁸⁾. Only communication can explain how those information brought by dr. Sjögren and dr. Gama Lobo took such different pathways.

In this fifth fascicle of 2013, the ABO again contributes uniquely to medical communication. The readers get 15 new articles, which 4 are case reports, 2 in the area of the retina, 1 review about sickle cell anemia and 10 original articles. Among those original articles, 5 are in Portuguese and 5 in English (all with abstracts in Portuguese and English). Here also, the first article submitted by the new electronic submission system (<http://mc04.manuscriptcentral.com/abo-scielo>), two articles involving foreign

institutions (one from Europe and one from North America) and several resulting from cooperation between different disciplines or areas of ophthalmology.

Congratulations to the authors and reviewers for the excellent issue. Their communication enriches, perpetuates and diffuses the ophthalmological knowledge. Congratulations also to their mentors, who have taught them the knowledge, the value and ability to engage in medical communication, also in written form.

Enjoy the reading.

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