

EDITORIAL

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Funding: The authors received no specific funding for this Editorial

Conflict of interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest

Received: 1 April 2021

Accepted: 12 April 2021

Online publication:

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Cite as: Ciudad Reynaud A, Pacheco-Romero J. Situation of women and pregnant women in Peru. Perspectives from the Peruvian Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology. Rev Peru Ginecol Obstet. 2021;67(1). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31403/rpgo.v67i2298>

Situation of women and pregnant women in Peru. Perspectives from the Peruvian Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology

Situación de la mujer y la gestante en el Perú. Perspectivas desde la Sociedad Peruana de Obstetricia y Ginecología

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31403/rpgo.v67i2298>

The maternal mortality ratio (MM) in Peru for the year 2020 has been estimated at 81.6 per 100,000 live births, negatively moving away from the downward curve of maternal deaths which from 114.2 per 100,000 live births in 2004 had declined to 55.1 per 100,000 live births in 2019⁽¹⁾. Peru has the same number of maternal deaths to date as in 2012⁽²⁾. There has been a considerable delay in the goal of reducing maternal mortality, in order to comply with the Millennium Development Goals⁽³⁾. The explanation for this adverse situation is the COVID-19 infection, which has plagued the world since the beginning of 2020. The curve of the number of infected Peruvian pregnant and puerperal women reached its highest peak in the third and fourth trimesters of 2020, between weeks 31 and 37, and fell to its lowest level in week 52, to rise again during the first 12 weeks of 2021, to an average of 463 infected pregnant and puerperal women per week⁽¹⁾. Maternal death has increased in the beginning of 2021 -corresponding to what is happening with deaths in the Peruvian population and in the world-, especially indirect maternal death caused by COVID-19 infection, which rose from 16.6% (415 cases) in 2020 to 36% (114 cases) up to week 13 of 2021. It is important to know that, of the direct causes of MM, hypertensive disorders increased slightly between 2019 and 2020 (from 19.5% to 21.4%, and were first cause of direct MM), and in the first trimester of 2021 their incidence dropped to 15.8%, being surpassed by obstetric hemorrhage (19.3%) which, however, seems to be decreasing since 2019 (25.9%). We cannot fail to mention the association found in several publications on a possible association between SARS-CoV-2 virus infection and preeclampsia^(4,5).

As one of the authors of this Editorial (ACR) assumes the presidency of the Peruvian Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology (SPOG), it is considered that the COVID-19 pandemic has made evident that an outdated health system in the country due to the little importance given to it by Peruvian rulers. There is lack of adequate implementation of health institutions, poor preparation for health catastrophes, failure in primary health care, closure of the first level of care during the pandemic, shortage of human resources prepared to deal with emergencies, intensive care units, etc. The failure to consider pregnancy as a risk factor for COVID-19 infection, among others, has caused the pandemic to have a profound impact on the health of the population in general and on women in particular.

Likewise, the lack of health research and the limitation of studies in the field of Peruvian women's health at different ages of life is clear.



An example of what remains to be investigated is shown by a cursory search in the Open Journal System (OJS) of the Peruvian Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics (RPGO) on articles related to important women's health issues. On the subject of maternal mortality - the official topic of many SPOG congresses - there are only 20 articles published between 1969 and 2020, only half of them studies of Peruvian populations. On obstetric hemorrhage, the OJS shows only 14 papers. Between 1999 and 2019, there are 20 publications on preeclampsia -the leading cause of maternal death in recent years- and only 6 original papers on Peruvian pregnant women, some of them referring to fetal studies. For the term abortion, only 20 articles were found. On endometriosis -a topic addressed in practically all the conferences and congresses- only 19 publications appear between 1956 and 2019, mostly reviews and proposals, very few research or statistical studies. The pelvic floor topic shows 3 articles, and only one is an original study. Of 18 articles that are related to infertility, 13 are original, most published before 2010. Of course, this quick visit to the OJS of the RPGO will have to be expanded to determine its reliability in providing accurate information, as well as to perform a better evaluation of the data by interested researchers.

This leads to pose that, members of our institution - led by the special committees of the SPOG - propose to determine which medical conditions and diseases in Peruvian women require investigation, particularly during the pandemic, and discuss them in our sessions, conferences, medical journeys and congresses, with statistical figures and approaches based on the results of the research, in order to offer OB/GYNs and health authorities, proposals, consensus, guidelines and recommendations. And, to the Peruvian woman, to provide her with suggestions, prevention measures and management of her morbidities, to lead her to a productive life with health.

A necessary and immediate research is on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the physiology and diseases of women, mainly the sequelae that the virus leaves in the girl, in the young woman of reproductive age, in the pregnant woman and her fetus and newborn, in the older adult woman, and the considerations that the obstetrician-gynecologist should have in her

care in this second decade of the XXI century, including her mental health. The research and presentation of results on these new topics will be welcomed and appreciated in the incorporations to full membership of SPOG associates and, at all times, from our scientific contributors and readers.

All the lectures at the monthly scientific sessions, congresses and conferences organized by the SPOG will be encouraged to provide personal or institutional case studies and, preferably, to compare them with national and international studies. These articles will be published in the SPOG Journal and their abstracts and comments by experts will be posted on the Society's website for dissemination.

A special section will be considered in the web-conducted by young specialists and with the supervision of those responsible for the scientific activities of the SPOG and the Editorial Committee of the RPGO-, directed to women and the Peruvian population on topics of interest of our specialty, women's diseases and others arising from the SARS-CoV-2 infection.

Finally, and with the experience of another Peruvian medical institution, we will consider that the SPOG Special Committees culminate their activities in ethical and deontological issues, scientific issues, sexual and reproductive rights, maternal and perinatal mortality, gynecological and breast oncology, maternal-fetal medicine, research and teaching, illegal practice of medicine in gynecology and obstetrics and representations to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) and the International Federation of Gynecologists and Obstetricians (FIGO), with a written document as a result of their activities and experiences, with guidelines or proposals for a better knowledge, implementation and solutions to the issues pertaining to their committee, for the benefit of SPOG associates and OB/GYNs in the country. Without forgetting to continue calling on all Peruvian OB/GYNs to join SPOG, in order to unify criteria for the care of women's health problems during the course of their lives.

The official scientific and academic publication of the SPOG is the Peruvian Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics, whose first volume appeared in 1955, directed by the gynecologist Dr. Lucas



Molina. As it celebrates its 66th anniversary, the current Board of Directors of SPOG has as one of its objectives to continue supporting its publication and to access the largest universal population of readers by modernizing its OJS page and activating the doi -which individualizes and characterizes each published article as a particular entity, similar to a national identification document. And emphasize that, in parallel, all articles should be disseminated via Instagram and twitter. Currently, each issue of the RPGO is already available on Facebook. Also, the management of the Journal needs to be professionalized to give it greater efficiency in its administration, editorial activities and publication.

The specialist in gynecology and obstetrics is a busy surgeon with many responsibilities in the present century. His scope of action is in private and institutional activity, in health centers, hospitals, clinics and related activities, which leaves less time for academic and scientific activities, research and publication.

Medical research in Peru is advancing in the University and in some scientific institutions. The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted the presentation of international virtual courses with great acceptance by the interested public, and may be a way to interest young OB/GYN physicians to solve their scientific questions and problems of the specialty, to carry out their personal and institutional work and to be interested in presenting their proposed solutions to medical concerns through research or systemic reviews or presentation of unusual cases. Although this interest should be born in university classrooms, we postulate that young physicians can also be institutionally taught how to pose problems, how to solve them and how to make the results known, through publication.

The SPOG has organized courses in obstetrics and gynecology research and publication in the past, as well as promoting free topic competitions at its congresses, with important initial results. We should not miss this opportunity to encourage research and present the results in our academic activities. But a greater impulse is required.

The SPOG Board of Directors has agreed with the Editorial Committee of the RPGO to place articles and links on the SPOG website to guide young specialists and those who wish to pursue specialty topics on how to determine a topic to study, how to initiate and conduct research in obstetrics and gynecology, and how the results are converted into a publication for the RPGO and others. And, according to the importance of these works, to present them at the scientific meetings of the SPOG, providing facilities and incentives to young physicians who wish to do so.

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