



## EDITORIAL

## Handing over and satisfaction of a term leading the Spanish Association of Paediatrics<sup>☆</sup>



### Entrega y satisfacción de una legislatura al frente de la Asociación Española de Pediatría (AEP)

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I peruse with interest my own editorials as president during this term: *The new AEP: innovation, investigation, union and independence. Leadership and generational handover, 2017.*<sup>1</sup> *A new year of AEP. What has happened with innovation, research and the merger, and with independence, leadership and the next generation?, 2018.*<sup>2</sup> *The AEP: The determining factor in the professional, epidemiological, sociocultural, and environmental changes that impact the health of the children of the country, 2019.*<sup>3</sup> *AEP: engine of the specialist's recognition and guarantor of the paediatric model. Generating health also in pandemic situations, 2020.*<sup>4</sup>

I am struck by the continuity of the message and its iron-clad guiding principles, addressing aspects from the very first year as crucial as independence, the intergenerational sharing of knowledge and the firm determination to promote research, which is what will unflinchingly bring progress. In the equator of the term, we observed the consolidation of important changes at the professional, epidemiological, sociocultural and environmental level with an impact on the health of Spanish children in these 4 years and evinced in the monumental effort exerted to perpetuate the Spanish paediatrics model. In the last period, we reaffirmed the indisputable leadership of the AEP and the process for the institutional recognition of this speciality.

At the beginning of the term the paediatrics speciality was in danger, as it was still a subject in the general core

curriculum of medicine after the Royal Decree was rejected, with no consideration of the paediatric subspecialties. The definitive recognition of paediatrics as a distinct speciality with its own curriculum is a key milestone achieved in this period. The consolidation of primary care (PC) paediatrics as the first level of care as the organising centre of health care delivery to children and families, with the strengthening of the model of continuity of care and the assertive pursuit of hospital-based paediatric specialities has been another achievement. Now we rest assured that paediatrics will be considered an independent speciality in medical education and of the commitment to allocate resources and promote PC paediatrics, with the accreditation by the competent institutional authorities of the curricula and advanced certifications in paediatric specialities. This is unquestionably one of the greatest achievements and satisfactions of our term in the presidency.

We have succeeded in consolidating the indisputable leadership of the association with unprecedented strength and transcending borders. I ought to elaborate on the impact of the activity of the AEP leading paediatric specialists at every level of care and in every setting in the unexpected and overpowering health crisis—the COVID-19 pandemic—that has been the driving force and stimulus of the AEP in this last period. This pandemic is not a situation that any previous or future leadership would want to face during their term in office, an enormous challenge, but one that not only our leadership—the AEP—has come out victorious from, but, more importantly, also the paediatricians, in a tangible and evident way that we would not have expected. In this term, we have achieved recognition for the leadership of the AEP despite the health care crisis, and with the certainty that the collective of Spanish paediatric-

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cians already perceived it months before, a reality that is now perceived as settled by institutions and society at large.

Needless to say, I do not believe that anyone is better than anyone else, rather, it is work that elevates us and brings us to our positions, so from the very moment that I was appointed president I committed to a leadership devoted equally to each and every paediatrician, to conveying the strength gained by working with honesty, austerity and transparency, with the objective of turning the AEP into a pioneering institution through progress and innovation (projects, platforms, initiatives, networks) and, although I did not know it at the time, capable of leading our collective through the most unpredictable and inordinate difficulties, also having an impact on the field of research on the subject COVID-19 during an unprecedented pandemic. Now that the time has come to step aside and give way to new approaches to leadership in the AEP in this brave, committed, conscientious and grateful executive committee, we realise that despite our deep exhaustion we feel immensely proud and satisfied with what has been achieved and with the level of scientific rigour and credibility that we have brought to the AEP. Endorsed by the legitimate backing of a board of directors that will be difficult to live up to, cohesive, rigorous and always supporting us through our proposals and our challenges, with expert committees that have been reinvented during this term, with the unconditional support of the administration and technical management team, and, to be sure, with the strength that we hold on account of representing the entire collective of paediatricians.

The tireless pursuit, finally accomplished, of an austere association on the path to sustainability thanks to the effort of its own members, focused on autonomy from industry, daring to the point of rescinding the authorisation inherited from the past to use our logos in products for children, a decision made by the executive board in the knowledge that it would result in substantial losses, but that was taken as a guiding principle, and limiting financial support strictly to "education and research", always in the form of independent and rigorous projects.

The creation and extraordinary development of internal structures evince the exponential and innovative growth of the AEP during this term. The research platform INVEST-AEP made it possible for the first time for the AEP to fund a nationwide networked clinical project that was indispensable in the context of the current pandemic, EPICO-AEP, with the support of the Ministry of Health and Consumption (MHC), the results of which have been requested to be shared by the WHO, Oxford-UK and different European networks.<sup>5</sup> The AEP has promoted the national clinical trials (RECLIP), which already has European reach through the project *Connect for Children-C4C-EmprEMA*,<sup>6,7</sup> and which accommodates every possible field. Also, for the first time, the MHC provided substantial financial support to a paediatric project, *Vertical Transmission-HIV*, in which the AEP played a crucial role. The interventions of the Committee on Environmental Health on child and adolescent health, which would have seemed unthinkable only a few years ago. The innovations of key committees (Advisory Committee on Vaccines, Nutrition, Medicines, Working Group on Paediatric Subspecialities). The revolution brought on by the "Continuum Training Campus" and the exponential growth of our flagship journal, *Anales de Pediatría*, with a rate of

dissemination, number of visits and impact factor that we would not have dreamed of in 2017.

I must not forget to highlight the accomplishment that has brought the greatest satisfaction to the executive committee after these 4 years of unconditional dedication, the indelible message that we have left ingrained in paediatricians: "*The union of all paediatricians is what made us big and gives us strength.*"

Whoever may think that in representing its members the AEP stirs confrontations between professionals in different levels of care is mistaken; joining forces and fighting for all fields equally is what has achieved and conveyed the greatness of the AEP we have today, from which we represent paediatricians in institutions and society, and from which we all fight together for a united vision of paediatrics.

As I write my last editorial as president, I feel the immense serenity of having fulfilled my duty, and I am comforted in the knowledge that I leave the AEP resting on firmly planted, strong pillars, and of having conveyed the strength that comes from union, which will ensure a smoother and consistent trajectory in the future.

Today, on March 8, I review this manuscript, to be released in June, for the last time, taking pride on having been the first female president in the 65 years of the AEP, and feel compelled to highlight that 80% of paediatricians in Spain are women.

Paediatricians, now you have the wind in your sails, now you are stronger, and acknowledged, and have become indispensable to society and the governmental authorities, now there are no longer any plans to replace us, but rather to empower us, to improve our training and recognise our role to ensure that our children and adolescents are in the best hands. Let us push forward, for we have reached this point through the determination to strive together towards progress, and we cannot let go of any of what we have accomplished!

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