

Closing Speech of the 2021 SAC Academic Ceremony

Discurso de cierre del Acto Académico 2021

Authorities of the Argentine Society of Cardiology, ladies, gentlemen, colleagues, family, and friends,

It is a true honor to address you again after one year in office.

The pandemic is not over, and is leaving us with serious health and social consequences, in addition to the emergence of outbreaks with new strains. We should also highlight that the rapid development of vaccines against COVID-19 disease is one of the greatest achievements of scientific and technological research in the world, even though, to date, equitable access to vaccines and treatments has not occurred. It is in this context that we had to lead the SAC throughout this year. Since it is time to draw a balance, I will share with you some aspects that I believe deserve to be highlighted.

Activities of the SAC areas. Undoubtedly, virtuality has caused a paradigm shift in teaching, but some emotions and some body language have been lost. Despite that, the Advanced Course has been widely accepted, with a progressive increase in the number of students. It was agreed that those who complete the biannual course will receive a 50% discount on the membership fee as an incentive to retain SAC members.

It is worth mentioning that, after several years of presentations, the National Directorate of Quality in Health Services and Sanitary Regulation finally renewed their recognition of the SAC as a Certifying Body for the Medical Specialty of Cardiology.

The cardiology community supported us with an increased number of attendees to all our activities. Compared to last year, we have had a 22% increase in attendees in the 25 courses SAC offers. There were almost 18,000 attendees in our symposiums, webinars, and conferences. In line with the idea of a more open and inclusive SAC, we decided to adjust the councils' regulations in order to facilitate the admission of new members.

The Research Area gave continuity to registries like ARGEN-IAM and SURF 2 (with the European Society), and continued to collaborate with the Registry of Acute Coronary Syndromes (RESCAR 2021) of the Emergency Council. Furthermore, the results of the RACCOVID were reported, and the INTER-ASPIRE continued under the international area. Other registries were launched, including the LAT-IN-SHOCK—the first Latin American Registry of Cardiogenic Shock Caused by Acute Coronary Syndrome, in which all Latin American societies as well as the Inter-American Society of Cardiology (SIAC)

were invited to join—and the ARGEN-CCV Registry of Cardiovascular Surgery. The Council on Cardiometabolism launched a Diastolic Dysfunction Protocol in diabetes and a Stroke Observatory in the City of Buenos Aires, coordinated by the pertinent council.

SAC Young Community is working on a registry of risk factors in the LGTB community, and is about to launch RENATA III on arterial hypertension, in collaboration with the Districts.

The following Consensuses have been presented or are in advanced drafting: cardiovascular prevention, adults with congenital heart disease, MINOCA, pregnancy and CVD, peripheral vascular disease, aortic disease, recommendations on driver's license renewal time for the healthy population and for patients with heart disease, psychosocial aspects of CVD, a position paper on the cardiac management in post-COVID patients, and a position paper on infiltrative heart disease. Moreover, the Manual on Critical Cardiology was republished, with 11 new chapters.

The Heart and Women area has also been extremely active organizing different activities in the field of cardiovascular health throughout Argentina. For example, the area conducted a survey on perception, knowledge and prevention of CVD risk factors in women that included 3338 non-physician women.

Empowering the districts area has been one of our objectives this year, through an active policy to encourage participation and growth. Virtuality has allowed us to get closer to colleagues from all over the country, and together we have sought solutions to the problems of each region. This is how the SAC-País regional districts have been active protagonists this year, not only for their successful conferences and webinars, but also for their great initiatives, such as lighting up monuments throughout the country to raise awareness of heart disease on World Heart Day. They also organized activities for the community, as well as for Women's Day. The districts' participation in the SAC Committees was encouraged. We sought to horizontalize the activity among areas; for instance, we managed to have the districts area work hand in hand with the Heart and Women area, the 25 x 25 Group, WikiCardio, and the Cardiology Foundation. I would like to highlight the great enthusiasm and participation of most of them.

As for PROSAC, a change in the format was implemented to make it more interactive, and a new program was developed and relaunched. SAC Young Community was invited to submit clinical cases and

disseminate them in networks. WikiCardio has also had an active online presence in social networks.

Regarding the relationship with universities, in the next few days we are signing an agreement with the *Universidad Nacional del Sur*, in the city of Bahía Blanca, so that this academic institution will sponsor our Biannual Cardiology Course. Thanks to this agreement, two institutions in that city will operate as centers where the practical activities for residents will be taught and the Biannual Cardiology Course will be used as formative theoretical training. The next step will be the creation of the Specialty Training in Cardiology at the *Universidad Nacional del Sur*. An agreement is about to be signed with the Pontifical Catholic University of Argentina (UCA) for a postgraduate course in hypertension, dyslipidemia and cardiometabolism; the SAC will provide the teachers and the UCA will provide the facilities.

As for health policies, we have been invited by the National Ministry of Health, together with other scientific societies, to discuss strategies for the population in the event of a possible second COVID-19 wave. Furthermore, we have participated in the *Telesalud* and in Health & Education roundtables, as well as in the drafting of the National Guidelines on HBP and Cholesterol. We continued to work with the Argentine Chamber of Medicinal Specialties (CAEME) and 27 other scientific societies in campaigns such as “Return to Consultation” and the “Vaccination, Prevention and Control”, as well as in the prevention of risk factors and control of chronic diseases campaigns, which were widely disseminated in social networks. We signed an agreement with the Comprehensive Medical Attention Program (PAMI) to take part in the elaboration of a Physicians’ Desk Reference (PDR) of free essential medicines for its affiliates. Recently, the Contentious Administrative Court 12C issued a favorable resolution to the writ of the amparo that the SAC filed in 2019, so that the National Executive Branch regulates the Law of Integral Prevention of Sudden Death 27159/15 that establishes a system of prevention of events in public and private places open to the general public access, and assigns its enforcement authority. With the Argentine College of Cardiology, we signed a framework agreement with the purpose of valuating the medical consultation, keeping it updated according to inflation rates, and combating labor precarization among health care professionals.

We stated our views through Position Papers, some of them together with other scientific societies. I would like to highlight our position paper on direct anticoagulants, as a result of the report that the National Commission for Health Technology Assessment (CONETEC) had sent to the National Ministry of Health, stating that these drugs are not cost-effective in Argentina and that they should be prescribed only by hematologists. We issued a joint response with the Argentine Federation of Cardiology (FAC), which was

published on the websites of both societies and in the Argentine Journal of Cardiology, and we succeeded in getting the authorities to back down. We also issued another document on COVID-19 and myocarditis, to advise that, since this complication was extremely rare, the vaccination plan should not be stopped, especially at a time with such large number of cases.

We have worked together with other national scientific societies. I would like to highlight only the most relevant activities. We were in close contact with the FAC and received its President at our headquarters; we expressed our commitment to strengthen this relationship by drafting a document in which we agreed to work together.

Together with the Argentine Society of Gastroenterology (SAGE), we organized a conference in which topics of common interest to both specialties were discussed. Along with the Argentine Society of Nephrology, we are writing a book on the vascular/renal association.

We have also signed agreements with the Argentine Association of Respiratory Medicine, and the Argentine Society of Obesity Surgery—which invited us to work together on a Diploma in Bariatrics and Metabolic Diseases—and we are about to sign an agreement with the Civil Association of Telemedicine of the Argentine Republic (ACTRA).

At the international level, the SAC has participated in congresses and joint activities with all Latin American societies. We were informed that SIAC will seek to improve the leadership role of member societies, which means to increase SAC presence in SIAC; same case with the South American Society.

We organized the first panel discussion on cholesterol in our country—within the framework of the Global Roadmaps initiative of the World Heart Federation (WHF)—in which barriers, solutions and ways to provide the population with access to the advances in evidence-based medicine were analyzed together with different scientific societies and health decision makers. We supported the WHF initiative to prohibit speakers sponsored by the tobacco industry in all the events. Within the framework of the European Congress, we agreed with the European Society of Cardiology to record a video in Spanish on the four most relevant papers on the same day of the presentation, and then upload them to our virtual stand at the European Congress and to the SAC website.

A group of residents from Argentina participated in a competition with representatives from other Latin American countries organized by the American College of Cardiology (ACC); our residents won and moved on to the finals to be held in March during ACC 22. The SAC and the ACC New York Chapter have signed an agreement by which colleagues from our country who are completing their residence program can rotate in New York State hospitals for one or two months; the competition will be opened soon.

The high academic level of our 2021 SAC Congress

was outstanding, with innovative activities and high attendance from all over the country. The international guests of the highest level are responsible for the main recently published studies, and authors of international guidelines in the specialty. I would also like to highlight the excellent technical quality presented in the congress. The Congress of Cardiovascular Imaging has also been a high-quality event.

The Argentine Journal of Cardiology has maintained the standards we are used to. Dr. Jorge Thierer, who had already held that position on an interim basis when Dr. Borracci passed away, was elected Director. The journal organized a course on how to publish an article in the Argentine Journal of Cardiology (RAC).

We developed a project for closer integration with the Argentine Cardiology Foundation, SAC's community arm, in order to work together. Since the current president is ending his 4-year term, Dr. Ana Salvati was elected for the next term. We wish her every success in her work!

We have had a year of economic and financial consolidation with a surplus balance, so we have decided to make some investments. Given that due to the pandemic, in-person practices of some courses in the institutions are increasingly difficult to hold, and patient contact is more limited, we decided to set up a simulation classroom. With those resources and some donations, we began the process of importing simulators, dummies for the courses on cardiac Doppler ultrasound with transducers for transesophageal echocardiography practice. The Córdoba District headquarters were remodeled, which was seriously deteriorated due to leaks and moisture. Taking advantage of the low number of colleagues at our Azcuénaga Street headquarters, we are renewing the electrical wiring, making repairs, and installing cameras and alarms. We hired a company to coordinate a press

communication and brand positioning campaign for the SAC.

First of all, I would like to thank all those who trusted me to hold this important position, and especially the former SAC Presidents, who have encouraged me, supported me, provided with ideas and proposals, and corrected manuscripts, and from whom I have received much affection. I would particularly like to thank the colleagues that work in all areas of the Society, who have sustained the high-quality scientific-educational activity, thus fulfilling SAC main mission. I would also like to thank the SAC staff, whose invaluable professionalism has helped us to carry on our activities. The past two years were very difficult, and despite in-person work was impossible, the mechanism continued to operate and we managed to increase the number of activities, proposals and members.

I would like to thank the Favaloro Foundation — my workplace— and its authorities and colleagues, especially the residents and students, from whom I learn every day. A huge thanks to the pharmaceutical and medical technology industry for their ongoing support. A special thanks to the colleagues of the Steering Committee, and particularly to the Board of Directors, for their energy and initiative; together we achieved an excellent working environment. Thank you to those who follow me in this path, I wish you the greatest success, which I am sure you will have because of your commitment and responsibility.

And thank you to my family, who have been by my side at all times.

With great pride of the journey we have all been on... I thank you very much!

Alejandro R. Hershson

President of the Argentine Society of Cardiology - 2021