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RESEARCH LETTERS

What exactly Portuguese respiratory professionals aim for their scientific Society: Findings from the VOICE online survey



Dear Editor,

The Portuguese Society of Pulmonology (Sociedade Portuguesa de Pneumologia – SPP), an organization founded in 1974, currently has around 850 members. Its primary objectives are to promote and protect health, education and professional training, by stimulating the study and dissemination of all topics related to respiratory health and respiratory pathology.

There is no current knowledge about the views and aims of Portuguese respiratory professionals for the future role and initiatives of the Portuguese Society of Pulmonology. Therefore, in September 2015, we decided to conduct an anonymous online survey about preferred initiatives, topics and learning formats for the future of SPP by creating a 10-item questionnaire to obtain information about these topics (using the Survey Monkey software). This initiative was disseminated via email and social media. Participants were asked to rate the strength of agreement with proposed statements using a 0–10 Likert scale (from not-important to highly-important). Mean scores for corresponding separate statements were calculated and compared according to professional status.

The survey was completed by 200 professionals: 58.5% pulmonologists, 24% Pulmonology residents, and 17.5% other medical professionals (lung physiologists 11% and respiratory physiotherapists 4%). Forty-eight percent were under 40 years of age. Thirty eight percent were working in National Health System (NHS) Hospitals with more than 500 beds and 23% worked in university hospitals.

Most of the respondents were consultants working for medium sized NHS hospitals or University hospitals, a good match with the official profile of the Portuguese pulmonologists.¹ Sixty-one percent of the respondents were registered in SPP working groups (15.7% were registered in more than two working groups). Surprisingly, respondents working in smaller NHS hospitals (less than 500 beds) had higher levels of participation in SPP working groups compared to respondents from large NHS hospitals or university hospitals. Looking at stratification by professional groups, there were lower levels of involvement among residents.

As to the topics that respondents wanted to be reinforced, the three most voted were: Ventilatory Support, Lung Function and Sleep Disordered Breathing (Fig. 1). Residents had a different view, preferring other topics, apart from Ventilatory Support (their number one), such as Oncology and Interstitial Lung Disease.

According to the respondents, the top three areas for future development were: first, creation of a Clinical Research Support Department; second, Coordination of Multicenter studies; and third, innovation and potentiating of the official web page (Fig. 2). If we only analyzed the residents reply, their preferred areas were Continuing Medical Education, Foreign Exchange programs and Grants.

Concerning the preferred learning formats, the respondents ranked, as their favorite, accredited practical courses.

In conclusion, this was one of the first and largest surveys to analyze how the Portuguese respiratory professionals want to see their Society in the future. This survey highlights that there are differences between topics and more valued initiatives according to the pulmonologists' age group.

Almost 40% of the respondents do not belong to any working group of the SPP, a gap that the Society needs to fill in the immediate future, to make it more active.

The three most voted topics (Ventilatory Support, Lung Function and Sleep Disordered Breathing) are core areas that

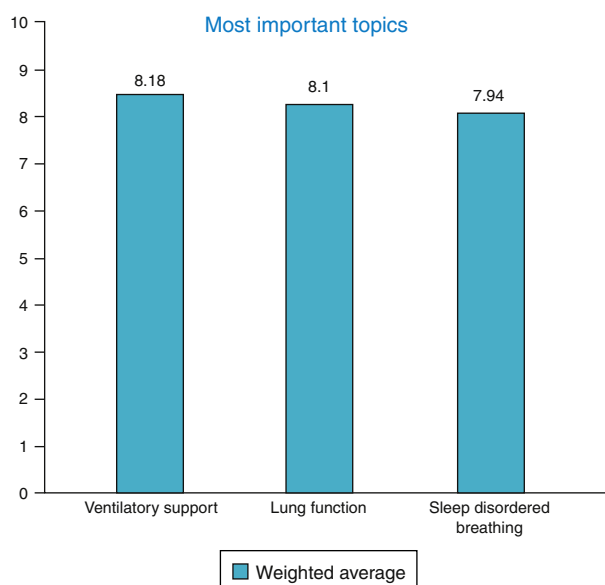


Figure 1 Most important topics.

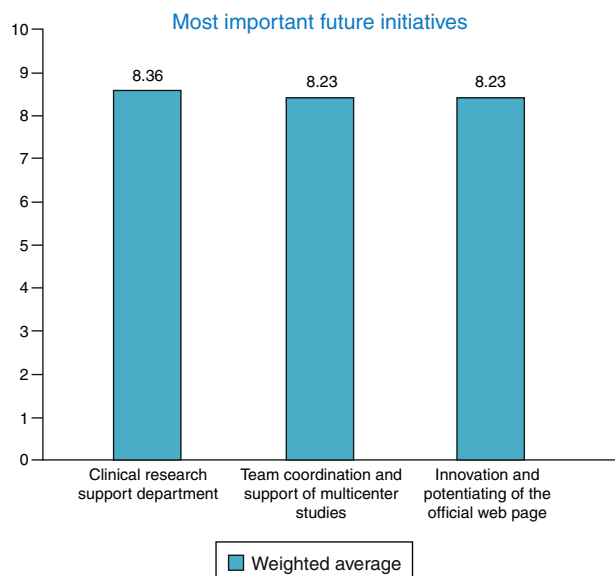


Figure 2 Most important future initiatives.

have evolved very fast in recent years and where the need for continuous update is highly valued.²

The creation of a Clinical Research Support Department committed to the Coordination of national Multicentre studies is suggested.

Accreditation although still not officially recognized in Portugal should be planned.

Moreover, simulation-based learning seems an important goal in post-graduate courses.

To monitor, engage and better understand the needs of our Society, follow-up is highly recommended. So we propose that periodic initiatives like this one should be carried out to understand the expectations and needs of SPP members.

Conflicts of interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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