By Jorge Sierra Gil, President SEHH¹, Carmen García Insausti, Secretary General SEHH²

National Society in Focus: The Spanish Hematology and Hemotherapy Society

History

The Spanish Hematology and Hemotherapy Society (SEHH) is a nongovernmental and not-for-profit organization, founded on May 22, 1959.

Aim

The aim of SEHH is to safeguard and contribute to the proper development of hematology and hemotherapy in Spain, by focusing its activities on the development of the professionals involved in this specialty through educational, research, regulatory and advocacy activities that translate into the continuous improvement of the quality of care given to patients.

Statistics

The SEHH was founded by 217 specialists who represented all hematologists in Spain at the time. Now, the Society has 2557 registered members, most of them being consultant and trainee hematologists. A minority consists of biologists, chemists, pharmacists, and medical doctors from other specialties, such as pediatrics, pathology, immunology, and related disciplines. Most members belong to the full category, followed by postgraduates, associated, and retired members, some of them emeritus. It is important to say that in Spain there are 76 certified training centers, and that nearly 100 residents complete their hematology training each year.

Organization

In order to pursue its missions, SEHH acts under the guidance of the Board, the governing body of the association dealing with issues of policy. The Board sets the Society's goals and objectives in conformity with the statutes. It consists of 15 members including a president, 2 vice presidents, an executive secretary, an assistant secretary, a treasurer, an accountant, and 8 councilors. Each Board member serves for 4 years. The Society Board installs committees to perform specific tasks and activities, (education, endorsement, e-learning, fellowships and grants, job boards, young hematologists, communication, scientific program of the annual congress) and designates representatives for other organizations. In addition, the SEHH has 20 scientific working groups that promote clinical trials and basic science, in order to raise the scientific level of the specialty and to contribute to the proper development of hematology and hemotherapy in Spain.

Major achievements

In recent years, the SEHH has raised the awareness of what hematology is in Spain and has increased the prestige and legitimacy among the partners, associates, and all stakeholders. Hematologists are regarded positively by Spanish public opinion, health institutions, and scientific societies. We have made an effort to emphasize the identity of our specialty, from laboratory diagnosis to clinical activities, transplantation and other hematopoietic cell therapies, thrombosis and bleeding as well as transfusion medicine.

The SEHH has an educational program that offers balanced activities covering most areas of hematology. Moreover, the Society has developed an increasingly well funded program of research grants. Funding in 2012 was €243,919, increasing to €1,038,000 in 2017. A total of

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From left to right: José Tomas Navarro, Valentín Cabañas Perianes, Domingo Borrego García, María Rozman Jurado, José Angel Hernández Rivas, Rafael Martínez Martínez, Jorge Sierra Gil, Angela Figuera Álvarez, Carmen García Insausti, José M^a Moraleda Jiménez, Pascual Marco Vera, Cristina Pascual Izquierdo, Carlos Fernández Panduro, Carlos Solano Vercet, Ana Batlle López, Ramón García Sanz, Joan Antón Abad

44 hematologists obtained grants or other research and training support in 2016. Additionally, since January 2017, the SEHH has started an e-learning platform to offer meeting and other scientific materials to the associates. The SEHH has an e-learning review committee to guarantee and safeguard the high quality of educational content offered to the associates.

With the goal of taking into account the voice of young hematologists and junior members, the SEHH has created a young hematologists committee, whose task is to advise the board on topics of interest for this group. Their actions have achieved great success in increasing the number of new members in the Society.

In conjunction with the Spanish Society of Thrombosis and Hemostasis (SETH) the SEHH each year organizes a three-day annual National Congress. It is divided into different areas, which include a Pre-Congress Meeting, an Educational Program, a Scientific Program, a Plenary Session, Commemorative Lectures, Awards, an SEHH-EHA Symposium, Meet-the-Expert Sessions, a Satellite Program, a Commercial Exhibition, Working Group Meetings, and a General Assembly. It attracts more than 1700 attendees from Spain and abroad that are provided with a forum to present original unpublished data and to share ideas for innovation in hematology. The number of submitted communications is more than 850 per congress.

The work of the SEHH Collaborative Groups has contributed to raising the quality of hematology research in Spain. Among the publications by Spanish hematologists, there are 348 citable studies per year, more than 55,000 citations, an average citation rate of 19.2/article, and a very low percentage of articles not cited (1.88%). The average impact factor of Spanish hematology publications is 4.9, and the growth rate is 25% in 10 years.

Collaboration with EHA

Members of the SEHH have been closely involved in EHA for many years. Prof. Emili Monserrat, a prominent Spanish hematologist, was a founding member of EHA in 1992 and its President between 2003 and 2005. He received the Jean Bernard Award in 2010 in recognition of his outstanding career as a hematologist. Other professionals with EHA recognition and/or participation in the leadership of the organization have been Profs. Rozman, San Miguel, Vicente, Mateos, and Sierra, among others. Spanish trainees have participated in the Master Class program. The Roadmap for European Hematology Research has been disseminated to all members of SEHH. Our Society fully agrees with and has disseminated the information contained in the EHA position papers as well as in the different editions of the Hematology Curriculum.

Since 2014, the SEHH organizes a joint Symposium with EHA that is included in the program of the National Congress. Of note, the EHA Annual Congress was hosted in Barcelona in 1999 and in 2008, and in Madrid in 2017. Profs. Montserrat, San Miguel, and Sierra were the Scientific Chairs of the meetings hosted in Barcelona and Stockholm, respectively.

EHA is a key player in hematology research and education not only in Europe but worldwide. This is of importance for Spanish hematologists; therefore, since 2015 the SEHH pays 1 year of membership to both EHA and SEHH to all hematology residents submitting a communication as first author that is accepted at the SEHH-SETH National Congress. The number of Spanish EHA members has increased from 65 in 2012 to 234 in 2017. Of note, EHA and SEHH have agreed to implement a joint membership with reduced fees that will start in January 2018.

It is noteworthy that during the 22nd Congress of EHA in Madrid, SEHH endorsed the Madrid Declaration on enhanced training requirements for hematologists in the Professional Qualifications Directive. Worth mentioning as well is that the day before the Madrid meeting, the first European Hematology Examination took place under the leadership of another

prominent Spanish hematologist, Dr. Jose Tomas Navarro. This examination was a great success and will be repeated every year.

In summary, the relationship of SEHH with EHA has been instrumental so far, and even closer interactions are warranted in the future. Good examples of what Spanish hematologists anticipate are:

- To achieve a harmonized hematology education in Europe by further promoting the European Hematology CV and passport.
- That the minimum training of Hematology in Spain will be at least five years.
- To foster the philosophy of continuing medical education and evaluation.
- To have common strategies and clinical guidelines for the care of patients, and eventually widen the job market for hematologists.
- To foster a research mentality among young hematologists.
- To increase the research potential of our working groups and promote cooperative transnational research.
- To facilitate the partnership between high-quality academic centers in order to receive and tutor young hematologists.