

EDITORIAL

Acta Reumatológica Portuguesa / ARP Rheumatology: 50 Years at a Glance - Five Decades by Five Rheumatologists

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Rheumatology in Portugal is set to celebrate its 75th anniversary in 2023, marking its birth in 1948 with the creation of the Associação Portuguesa de Reumatologia, which later gave rise to the Instituto Português de Reumatologia. A persistent and diligent journey paved the way for the establishment of various institutions that underpin modern Rheumatology in Portugal. In 1972, the Sociedade Portuguesa de Reumatologia (Portuguese Society of Rheumatology - SPR) was founded, prompting the need to enhance the scientific significance of the specialty, resulting in the creation of Acta Reumatológica Portuguesa in 1973, followed by the Portuguese Congress of Rheumatology in 1974. Visionaries such as Assunção Teixeira, Luis de Pap, Robert Martins, and João Figueirinhas played pivotal roles in shaping the early days of Rheumatology in Portugal. They not only worked diligently to establish the specialty but also prioritized patient needs and expectations. They were followed closely by António Lopes Vaz and Mário Viana Queiroz, who expanded Rheumatology from the Instituto Português de Reumatologia, where they received their clinical training, to university hospitals in Lisbon and Porto, and eventually to the university itself. Many others followed this path, thereby building a robust and science-based specialty.

The official recognition of the specialty in 1977 and the establishment of rheumatology residency programs in 1980 marked significant milestones, the result of arduous efforts since 1957, driven by the influence of early rheumatologists. In 1977, only 22 doctors were eligible to apply for the specialty, becoming the first rheumatologists¹.

Acta Reumatológica Portuguesa (ARP) has played a crucial role in the development of rheumatology, a role that deserves celebration as the journal reaches its 50th anniversary, and that evolved along those five decades in terms of quality and also in image (Figure 1). We

have enlisted five specialists to evaluate each decade, providing unique perspectives on the significance of ARP.

1973-1980 DECADE (by Cunha-Miranda L)

ARP was established as the scientific journal of the Portuguese Society of Rheumatology in 1973, boasting an editorial board comprising Portuguese specialists in rheumatology and other medical fields, as well as collaborations with international specialists as initial authors. Early editions primarily featured reviews of communications presented at congresses and scientific meetings. A notable demonstration of ARP's importance came in 1974 when the President of EULAR penned an editorial emphasizing the role of SPR and the new ARP². In ARP's volumes 4, 5, and 6 in 1974, it provided scientific support for the first Portuguese Congress of Rheumatology, focusing on gout and its clinical and epidemiological aspects. This edition included one of the most crucial papers on organizing rheumatology as a specialty, authored by Robert Martins, one of the most influential rheumatologists of his generation. Martins proposed a three-pillar structure for rheumatology, encompassing clinical, scientific, and social aspects, a concept that remains integral to numerous associations, including EULAR. This document remains a cornerstone in understanding how a niche specialty achieved remarkable progress, much like the evolution of ARP over the past 50 years³.

In the 1970s, language criteria were not stringent, resulting in papers and editorials in English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese, prioritizing paper quality over language or author origin. ARP also served as a platform for presenting articles related to political planning, such as a significant paper on pre-graduate teaching of Rheumatology in 1975. In this edition, Viana Queiroz, one of Portugal's first Professors of Rheumatology, not only advocated for pre-graduate teaching to medical students but also outlined a comprehensive plan for 36 teaching classes over 6 months, distributed across the second and third years of university. This plan laid the foundation for the modern teaching of Rheumatology in Portuguese Medical Schools⁴.

ARP was also engaged in the political landscape of the time, as evidenced by a 1975 publication featuring

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Figure 1. Different images of ARP in 50 years

a conference by the Portuguese Health Secretary on Rheumatology, Peace, Democracy, and the Armed Forces Movement in the context of the Portuguese revolution of 1974⁵.

In 1976, ARP published a groundbreaking epidemiological study conducted with the cooperation of 432 general practitioners, evaluating 24,803 patients according to a predefined protocol. This study revealed that 22.8% of patients presented with rheumatic complaints, with an overall diagnosis of rheumatic diseases in 38% of cases. Osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, gout, and rheumatic fever were the most prevalent diagnoses. This study serves as a benchmark in understanding the epidemiology of rheumatic diseases, particularly in the context of a general practitioner's clinic⁶.

In subsequent years, ARP continued to publish relevant research, especially in issues dedicated to the national congress. Two noteworthy papers from the same author stand out. The first, from 1977, focuses on work, rheumatic diseases, and aging populations, highlighting the importance of disability prevention, presentism, and early retirement as outcomes of Rheumatology. Finally, Rheumatology was officially recognized as a specialty in Portugal on July 5, 1977. The last highlighted paper is another editorial by Robert Martins, published in the fourth quarter of 1978, in which he elucidates the organization of rheumatology

residency programs and outlines the resources needed in medical departments and clinical practice to ensure the quality of these programs. This paper served as the foundation for the rheumatology residency program approved in 1980⁷.

ARP's evolution, in this decade, provided substantial support for the scientific development of early rheumatologists and played a crucial role in defining the specialty, particularly from a political perspective. The highlighted papers remain essential readings for both young and seasoned rheumatologists, offering insight into how science and a specialty can evolve over 50 years when built upon strong scientific and clinical foundations

1983-1989 DECADE (by Vaz C)

This was the decade that witnessed the revival of ARP, as announced in its inaugural editorial in March 1983. For reasons unexplained, ARP had not been published between 1979 and 1983. In this editorial, Robert Martins outlined the editorial plan for a new journal, which was based on publishing four issues per year and included several distinctive sections. These sections encompassed original research, interdisciplinary themes, clinical cases, review articles, and historical aspects of rheumatology. The foundation of this plan rested on the need to revive a journal that had previously held

national and international significance and entrusted this task to new residents and rheumatologists. The challenge was succinctly encapsulated in Latin: “Ad majorem rheumatologiae gloriam alea jacta est!” - For the greater glory of rheumatology, a gamble has been taken⁸. Throughout nearly a decade, ARP consistently maintained its publication schedule with a highly diverse content. It predominantly featured review articles and interdisciplinary themes, but also consistently included a number of original research papers. By today’s standards, some of these original papers could be considered as review articles or case series. Much like the 1970s, some of the original papers were adapted from oral presentations at conferences or scientific meetings. The increased presence of residents in published clinical cases and review articles signified a transformation in the field. Similar to publications in the 1970s, abstracts from meetings of SPR were occasionally included, showcasing early scientific work conducted by residents and rheumatologists.

Overall, we can observe the evolution of a struggling journal towards stability in terms of the proposed sections, with editions featuring as many as nine articles or clinical cases and one edition with just three. In later years of the decade, the journal typically included one editorial, original articles, reviews, and clinical cases. Notable exceptions include the June 1987 edition, which was entirely dedicated to pediatric rheumatology.

The editorials, initially quite politically oriented, shifted towards a more clinically driven focus, primarily authored by the editor-in-chief. One exception is an editorial in the final 1989 edition by Jaime Branco, in which he discusses the 1990s as a decade full of challenges, interestingly, as he was one of the leaders, among others, in the transformation of rheumatology in the following decades⁹.

This decade was pivotal for ARP and Portuguese Rheumatology as it witnessed the influx of new residents and specialists, thus providing the critical mass necessary for improved scientific research and subsequently more publications. Over this decade, we also observed a stabilization in the content areas of the journal. While it may not have been an extraordinary decade for ARP, it marked a consistent rebirth and a successful gamble taken by Portuguese Rheumatology.

1990-1999 DECADE (by Santos MJ)

The 1990s were characterized by substantive editorial reforms, diversification of content, and strategic endeavors aimed at enhancing ARP scientific relevance. In the early 1990s, ARP was positioned as a national journal with a significant presence in the field of rheumatology. It played a pivotal role in disseminating comprehensive knowledge pertaining to

rheumatic diseases, thereby consolidating its position as a cornerstone in the spreading of rheumatological expertise amongst professionals.

Professor Mário Viana Queiroz led ARP as its editor until 1994, leaving an enduring mark on the journal’s trajectory. Concurrently, the contributions of the rheumatology team of Hospital de Santa Maria (HSM) played an instrumental role in ensuring consistent publication while demonstrating a persistent commitment to the advancement of Portuguese rheumatology.

Within its pages, ARP regularly featured case series encompassing a wide spectrum of conditions, including Rheumatoid Arthritis, Ankylosing Spondylitis, Psoriatic Arthritis, Sjogren’s Syndrome, Reactive Arthritis, Vasculitis, Osteoporosis, Paget’s disease of Bone, along with clinical case studies spotlighting uncommon rheumatic conditions and review articles addressing diverse topics. Notably, contributions from foreign authors remained relatively modest during this epoch.

Initially, ARP articles were accompanied by abstracts in both English and French. However, during the 1990s, the inclusion of French abstracts was discontinued, coinciding with significant structural and graphical transformations that refreshed the journal’s visual presentation. Editorial transitions took place as Dr Viviana Tavares and Professor J.A. Pereira da Silva assumed editorship in 1995 and 1999, respectively.

This phase was marked by proactive initiatives aimed at fostering scientific collaborations, expanding ARP’s international readership, and positioning the journal as a forum for academic discourse and the dissemination of viewpoints and developments within the field of rheumatology.

Concerted efforts were undertaken to stimulate scientific collaborations and attract authors from abroad, particularly from Brazil, Spain and France, in order to overcome challenges related to acquiring suitable material for publication. It’s important to note that at the time ARP was not indexed and its international visibility was limited.

ARP’s evolution closely paralleled the growth of national rheumatology. The journal saw an increase in the diversity of original articles and contributions from international scholars. Its commitment to quality and consistency in publication, with 4 to 6 issues annually, paved the way for ARP’s eventual indexation in PubMed database in the following decade.

Undoubtedly, the 1990s represent a transformative period. During this decade the journal not only solidified its pivotal role within the Portuguese rheumatology landscape but also extended its influence opening the doors to internationalization and strengthening its presence in the global arena.

2000-2009 DECADE (by Salvador MJ)

The beginning of this new millennium was decisive and remarkable for Portuguese Rheumatology and for the ARP Rheumatology.

More than 500 national and international organizations have declared the decade of 2000-2010 as the “Decade of Bone and Joint”, aiming to spread knowledge regarding musculoskeletal diseases, and promoting research, prevention and treatment of these diseases.

In 2003, the EULAR Congress took place in Lisbon, with the support of the Portuguese Society of Rheumatology (SPR) organization. This event driven the Portuguese Rheumatology to create and produce several projects, greatly increasing scientific knowledge. In this year the publication of the first guideline recommendation from SPR was an important milestone for more than 30 that followed in several areas of rheumatology¹⁰.

In 2006 the website Reuma.pt was created, designed and promoted by SPR to keep a national prospective registry of rheumatic patients. Making it possible to collect and process clinical data from patients from several national centres, thus increasing the number and quality of many of the articles about some of the rheumatic pathologies that have been published.

In July 2006, the ARP was indexed to the Medline/Pubmed, due to the increasing editorial demand and, consequently, the improvement of the published articles quality. This was a tremendous step for the ARP, made possible due to the cumulative work and dedication from many who contributed to the ARP.

The creation of the SPR Newsletter (BI- Boletim Informativo) came to constitute an excellent means of dissemination in Rheumatology, helping to promote this medical specialty.

Evaluating the period between 2000 and 2009, excluding the issues dedicated to Congresses and the texts published as Editorial, we have evaluated 40 issues, with a total of 382 articles published. Of these, 100 were Clinical Cases (26.17%), 98 were Original Articles (25.65%), 87 were Review Articles (22.77%), 48 Images in Rheumatology (12.56%), 16 Rheumatology articles in General Practitioner (4.18%), 11 Opinion Leader articles (2.87%), 11 Consensus and Recommendation articles (2.87%) and others (1.83%).

The majority of these articles mainly focused on Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE), followed by Rheumatoid Arthritis and Osteoporosis. It was also in this decade that biological therapies (TNF-alpha inhibitors) began to be used, which completely modified the treatment and prognosis of rheumatic diseases. Publications in this area quickly began to appear, on efficacy, safety and management recommendations.

Nevertheless, the articles of Consensus and Recom-

mendations also carry great weight, having also appeared in this decade, referring to information that comes from peer consensus, constituting important instruments to improve the quality of provided medical care. The publication of this consensus in the ARP allows them to be widely dispersed and promoted, thus helping physicians in their clinical practice.

In 2005 the first analysis of patients with rheumatoid arthritis undergoing biological therapy was published, registered in the database of biological agents of the Portuguese Society of Rheumatology (SPR). A total of 376 patients were registered in 11 Portuguese Rheumatology centers, establishing then the first multicenter report of the real world evidence behind the Rheumatoid Arthritis therapy with biological agents in Portugal¹¹.

At the beginning of 2005 an important epidemiological study on Systemic Lupus Erythematosus in Portugal was also published, using a questionnaire developed by the European Federation of SLE (EUF), which was composed of 941 patients, members of the Portuguese Association of Patients with Lupus, thus allowing to collect and analyze important information about the disease in a Portuguese population¹².

In 2009 is published an article regarding the vision of Portuguese Rheumatology, on human resources specialists and the future of the specialty following 10 years¹³. Today, 14 years later, we can collectively say that the specialty has grown, in all aspects, quite satisfactorily, but there is still much to do, in order to achieve the ideal referred in this article.

2010-2020 DECADE (by Vieira-Sousa E)

The Acta Reumatológica Portuguesa, currently ARP Rheumatology, is a source of pride, but also of great responsibility for the Portuguese Society of Rheumatology (SPR) and all Portuguese rheumatologists. As the SPR's official scientific journal, its mission is to maintain the quality/excellence of its publications and act as a stimulus for national scientific production in clinical, laboratory and translational research. Its sustainability and growth is the result of the commitment and vision of the various SPR Directorates who knew how to recognize the importance of caring for this journal, as well as its Editors-in-Chief, -Associates, -Technicians, reviewers, authors and patients, whose activity, sometimes unnoticed, it is crucial to the success of all stages of ARP publication.

Between 2010 and 2020, a total of 58 editions were published (6 on average/year), corresponding to 4 quarterly editions, the annual supplement of the Portuguese Congress of Rheumatology and some special supplements referring to Recommendations, SPR Symposiums, Conferences of the Portuguese Institute of Rheumatology and international congresses

held in Portugal such as the European Workshop for Rheumatology Research.

During this decade, the Editors-in-Chief were Helena Canhão (2010-2012), Mónica Bogas and Joaquim Polido Pereira (2012-2014) and Elsa Vieira de Sousa (2014-2020).

It was a decade of profound transformations and innovation. One of the first landmarks of this decade was the creation of a dedicated website that allowed a completely online article management process. This objective was achieved in 2012. However, this was not without tribulations and the following 2 years required an effort to stabilize the submission, peer-review and editing circuits. In parallel during this decade, the editorial and reviewers' body was expanded and renewed, and tools such as the reviewer's manual, were developed. The editorial strategy was based on a demanding peer review process ensuring that only articles of adequate scientific quality were approved, which resulted in high rejection rates (often >80%). Annual meetings with the editorial board to jointly discuss the editorial strategy were instituted and recommendations for authors were frequently updated accordingly. In particular, 2018 was a notorious year, during which the editions became entirely in English and digital, disseminated through a newsletter to all rheumatologists.

Furthermore, some iconic articles from this period deserve to be highlighted – namely the article “REUMA. PT - THE RHEUMATIC DISEASES PORTUGUESE REGISTER” published in 2011 by Helena; Canhao, Augusto Faustino, Fernando Martins, Joao Eurico Fonseca, which aimed to describe the structure of Reuma.pt and present the first analysis data on registered patients since the creation of the registry in 2008¹⁴. This was the 2nd article with the highest number of quotes published between 2010-2020. The most cited article of this decade was actually a review article on the RANK/RANKL AND OPG route, written by Inês Silva and Jaime Cunha Branco published in the same year¹⁵. This article reviews functional aspects of this osteometabolic pathway and its relevance in various rheumatic and non-rheumatic diseases as well as potential therapeutic implications. In the following two years, two other articles stood out: “Neurological involvement in Primary Sjogren's Syndrome” by Filipa Teixeira, Isabel Moreira, Ana Martins Silva, Carlos Vasconcelos, Fatima Farinha e Ernestina Santos¹⁶ and the article “Bone histomorphometry revisited” by B Vidal, Pinto, A.; Galvao, M.J.; Santos, A. R.; Rodrigues, A.; Cascao, R.; Abdulghani, S.; Caetano-Lopes, J.; Ferreira, A.; Fonseca, J. E.; Canhao, H¹⁷. In the first, the prevalence, manifestations and evolution of neurological impairment is studied in a cohort of

patients diagnosed with Sjogren's syndrome. In the second histomorphometry technic including bone biopsy, samples processing, staining and analysis namely structural parameters, bone formation and resorption parameters are described in detail.

Overall, during the 2010-2020 decade ARP was a driving force to improve rheumatology scientific knowledge. Its credibility and visibility increased leading to, in 2020, the attribution of its highest impact factor ever up to then of 1.185. But most of all it was a decade guided by scientific rigor, fostering high quality knowledge dissemination and therefore contributing to fascinating progresses in the field of rheumatology.

50 YEARS OF ARP AND ITS MILESTONES

In 50 years ARP/Rheumatology had a long journey to become the journal that we have today. Several editors were involved (Table I) as well as most of the Portuguese rheumatologists as researchers, reviewers or just members of the Portuguese Society of Rheumatology board members ensuring the scientific autonomy and economic means for the development of ARP.

Several milestones (Figure 2) were achieved during these years but we can highlight a few, the indexation to Medline in 2006, result of a consistent work done by João Eurico da Fonseca and his editorial team, being the first Rheumatology Ibero-american Journal

Table I. Editors in Chief 1973-2023

Year	Editor in Chief
1973-1975	Yolanda Guerra
1975-1977	Georgette Banet
1977-1979	Galvão de Figueiredo
1979-1981	(inactivity)
1981-1982	(inactivity)
1983 – 3 trimesters	Luís Araújo Rego
1983-1985	Mário Viana de Queiroz
1985-1987	Robert Martins
1987-1991	José Alberto Pereira da Silva
1991-1994	Aurora Marques
1994-1998	Viviana Tavares
1998-2002	José António Pereira da Silva
2002-2004	Paulo Coelho
2004-2006	João Eurico Fonseca
2006-2008	Maria José Santos
2008-2010	Lúcia Costa
2010-2012	Helena Canhão
2012-2014	Mónica Bogas/Joaquim Pereira
2014-2020	Elsa Vieira de Sousa
2020-	Alexandre Sepriano

ARP milestones

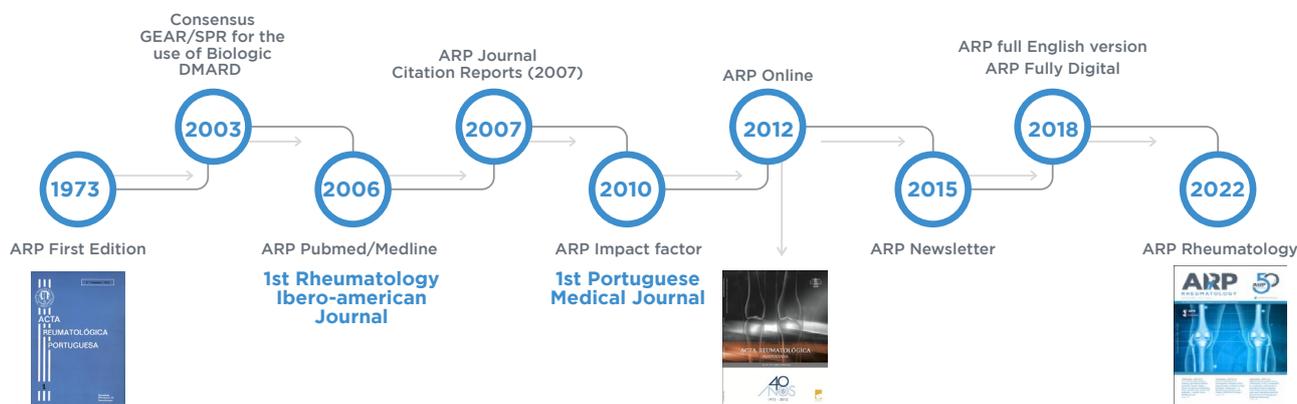


Figure 2. Milestones 1973-2023.

indexed to PubMed. In 2010 ARP became the first Portuguese medical journal with an impact factor and with a consistent increase since then. In 2003 one of the clinical highlights was the first consensus on the use of biologics in rheumatoid arthritis, since than more than 30 consensus, guidelines or position papers on a large number of diseases or medications were developed by the Portuguese rheumatology community and published in ARP¹⁰.

Lastly in 2018-2020 the board of the Portuguese Society of Rheumatology and the editors of ARP decided strategic modernization of the journal with the conversion to full English and full digital and also to adapt the name from Acta Reumatológica Portuguesa to ARP Rheumatology implemented in 2022.

We do know that the evolution of a scientific journal is dependent on several variables but the path followed by ARP Rheumatology since its beginnings 50 years ago is a warranty of success and hopefully further 50 years full of new milestones.

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