

## Highlights of International Congresses. Report from our Representatives at the Following International Events

*Highlights de los Congresos Internacionales. Informe de nuestros representantes en los siguientes eventos internacionales*

### 18TH ALAT CONGRESS – CANCÚN, MEXICO, JULY 9 TO 12, 2025

#### Overview and Argentine Participation

By Dr. Walter Mattarucco, former President of the AAMR

At the 18th ALAT Congress in Cancún (July 9-12, 2025), Argentina's strong participation stood out in both scientific presentations and clinical update and discussion forums. Below are some of the most relevant highlights:

- **Presentation of the Work of the Obstructive Diseases Section.** Poster No. 242, entitled “Brechas de conocimiento en el manejo del asma durante el embarazo: un estudio transversal” (Knowledge gaps in the management of asthma during pregnancy: a cross-sectional study) was presented by the AAMR Obstructive Diseases Section.
- **New Paradigms in COPD.** In a master class open lecture, Drs. Antonio Anzueto, Bartolomé Celli, and Francisco de Borja García Cosío Piqueras explored the “upstream” treatment of COPD, that is, intervening from the very early stages of the disease. The GeTOmics hypothesis by Agustí and Celli was discussed, framing COPD development as the result of lifelong gene-environment interactions (e.g., maternal smoking, low birth weight, lack of breastfeeding, vaping, biomass exposure). Also, experts proposed incorporating the “pre-disease” concept-evaluating symptomatic patients with normal spirometry via imaging studies and other methods.
- **Phenotypes and Multimorbidity.** The importance of recognizing different clinical phenotypes was emphasized (inflammatory phenotype with high BMI and multiple comorbidities vs. emphysematous phenotype with low BMI and sarcopenia). Experts also stressed the need for personalized medicine guided by functional tests (walking tests, BMI, mMRC [modified Medical Research Council dyspnea scale]), as well as redefining key concepts of the disease.
- **Triple Therapy and Biologics in COPD.** The speakers presented the benefits of initiating triple therapy at earlier stages. Regarding biologics, they emphasized the use of dupilumab in patients with more than 300 eosinophils/mm<sup>3</sup>, showing significant benefits in lung function and reduced exacerbations (BOREAS and NOTUS studies).
- **Exacerbations: New GOLD Definitions.** The session on exacerbations (with Drs. Montes de Oca, Marc Miravittles, and B. Celli) presented a redefinition based on objective clinical criteria, following the ROMA proposal, which could transform the diagnostic and therapeutic approach in these situations. References: Celli B, AJRCCM 2021; 204: 1251–1258.
- **Treatment of Comorbidities.** The use of new drugs such as SGLT2 inhibitors was explored. This drug may benefit COPD patients with comorbidities such as heart failure or cardiorenal-metabolic syndrome.
- **Severe Asthma and New ALAT Guidelines.** The new ALAT 2024 Clinical Practice Guideline of Severe Asthma, already published in Respirar, which includes phenotypic assessment and selection of the appropriate biologic therapy was presented. A new definition of asthma exacerbations was also introduced (mild, severe, very severe), differentiating the management of the disease according to the clinical setting.
- **A new paradigm?** Several presentations concluded that a comprehensive approach to inflammatory airway diseases may be emerging, blurring the traditional boundaries between asthma, COPD, and bronchiectasis.

## Lung Transplantation Department

By Dr. Pablo Curbelo, Director of the ALAT Transplantation Department

During the recent ALAT Congress held in Cancún, the Lung Transplantation Department had a prominent participation, with numerous academic activities, international cooperation projects, and progress on key documents for the region. Below, we share the main focus areas:

- **Pre-Congress Course on Lung Transplantation.** It featured the participation of leading experts from lung transplant centers across Latin America, as well as prestigious international institutions such as the University of Miami, San Francisco, Chicago, and Toronto General Hospital. The course promoted academic exchange, sharing of clinical experiences, and the strengthening of collaboration among professionals dedicated to the treatment of advanced lung diseases.
- **ALAT Lung Transplantation Recommendations.** The region's first document on lung transplantation in Spanish is in its final phase. With chapters developed by specialists from reference centers, it addresses topics ranging from indications, contraindications, and referral criteria to the role of nursing, ECMO (extracorporeal membrane oxygenation), rehabilitation, and self-care for transplant patients.
- **ALAT-ISHLT Cooperation Agreement.** Initial steps have been taken to establish an agreement between ALAT (Latin American Thoracic Association) and the International Society for Heart and Lung Transplantation (ISHLT). The goal is to promote human resource training through clinical rotations, academic cooperation, and joint activities such as webinars in Spanish.
- **Framework Document to Promote Organ Donation and Allocation.** Work is underway on a regional proposal aimed at strengthening organ donation in Latin America, improving organ preservation, and reducing mortality on the waiting list. The document will be presented to regulatory agencies to promote the creation of a regional organ allocation network, similar to Eurotransplant.
- **Best Oral Presentation – Innovation in Lung Preservation.** 'Optimization of Lung Preservation from uDCD Donors'. Juan Mon-

tagne and colleagues (Toronto General Hospital) presented a study on lung preservation in uncontrolled donation after cardiac death (uDCD). The combination of storage at 10°C and ex vivo lung perfusion (EVLP) demonstrated significant improvements in lung function, even in settings of warm ischemia.

## Respiratory Pathophysiology and Pulmonary Function Laboratory Department

By Dr. Santiago Arce, member of the Respiratory Pathophysiology and Pulmonary Function Laboratory Section of the AAMR

The ALAT Pathophysiology Program had an active and outstanding Argentine participation during the ALAT 2025 Congress in Cancún. Below, we share the most relevant highlights:

- **Pre-Congress Spirometry Course.** With an excellent level of organization and a room filled with participants, the pre-congress spirometry course demonstrated the high level of interest and commitment within the respiratory community. Argentine professionals were part of the faculty, providing their clinical and academic experience.
- **Cardiopulmonary Exercise Testing Workshop.** This session featured renowned European and Latin American experts. Key technical and clinical aspects for interpreting this essential diagnostic tool were covered, creating a high-level training environment.
- **High-Altitude Medicine Symposium.** The symposium featured regional experts who shared their clinical and research expertise on high altitude medicine. Initiatives to promote collaborative studies in this field were discussed, reflecting its growing interest and impact on the Andean region.

## Respiratory Rehabilitation Department

By Mr. Santiago Larrateguy, member of the Respiratory Rehabilitation Section

I had the privilege of participating in the 18th Congress of the Latin American Thoracic Association (ALAT), a forum that reaffirms the region's commitment to scientific updating and exchange among colleagues from across Latin America.

Symposium: **Therapeutic Exercise in Chronic Respiratory Diseases**

I co-chaired this symposium with Rodrigo Torres (Chile), where training strategies applied to patients with chronic respiratory diseases were discussed.

**Jhonatan Betancourt (Colombia)** opened the session with a presentation on **interval training**, assessing its applicability and tolerance compared to continuous methods, especially in patients with ventilatory limitation. **Rodrigo Torres** then delved into the **estimation of oxygen consumption** using field tests, highlighting the importance of an accessible yet accurate assessment for guiding exercise prescription. **Alejandro Casas Herrera (Colombia)** concluded with an innovative perspective by presenting **non-conventional rehabilitation models** such as tai chi, yoga, and rumba, underscoring their value in improving adherence, motivation, and overall patient well-being. An approach that invites us to broaden the therapeutic options beyond traditional training.

#### Lecture: **Keys to Success in Oxygen Therapy for People with Chronic Respiratory Diseases**

I attended this lecture, which addressed fundamental aspects of the use of home oxygen therapy. One of the most notable points was the need to use **FDA-validated oximeters**, given the inconsistent accuracy of devices available on the market. The personalization of treatment according to activity level, patient adherence, and functional assessment was also covered.

#### **Practical Workshop: Airway Clearance in the Chronic Respiratory Patient**

I also participated in the workshop focused on **airway clearance strategies**, co-chaired by Matías Otto (Chile) and Diego Sossa (Costa Rica).

Topics ranged from the **role of secretions** in the clinical course of chronic respiratory diseases to the use of practical tools such as: **Manual Airway Drainage Techniques, OPEP Devices, Mechanical Cough Assistance**.

I concluded with a presentation on **physical exercise as an active airway clearance technique**, underscoring its impact on secretion mobilization, improved functional capacity, and patient autonomy.

This congress was a great opportunity to continue learning, share experiences with colleagues, and reaffirm the value of interdisciplinary work in respiratory health.

#### **Tuberculosis Department**

**By Dr. Sandra J. Inwentarz, member of the AAMR Tuberculosis Section and the ALAT TB Department**

The ALAT Tuberculosis Department had a very diverse program with numerous educational and update activities.

- During the Pre-Congress Course, strong emphasis was placed on subclinical TB, its pathophysiological mechanisms, and the importance of imaging for its diagnosis.
- The treatments were updated, highlighting the new treatments proposed by the WHO for multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB), pre-extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis (pre-XDR), and extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis (XDR). Experiences with the BPaL and BPaLM regimens were addressed, with an initial duration of 6 months that can be extended to 9 months depending on clinical, bacteriological, and radiological progression. New proposals from the BEAT TB Trial, with a 6-month regimen, and the END TB Trial, with a 9-month regimen, were introduced, featuring bedaquiline with or without delamanid.
- The “National TB Guidelines Forum in Latin America” analyzed TB guidelines from various countries, evaluating their similarities and differences, and proposed a unified guideline for the entire region.
- Updates were also provided on extrapulmonary forms of TB, TB and comorbidities, and TB in vulnerable groups and in people deprived of liberty.
- The need to monitor pregnant women was emphasized, given that the number of TB patients in this group has progressively increased throughout Latin America.
- Twenty-eight scientific papers were evaluated in poster format, demonstrating high academic quality and broad representation from Latin America.
- The Recommendations on Post-Tuberculosis Lung Disease were presented, as well as the **Latin American Registry of Patients with Post-Tuberculosis Lung Disease: Analysis of clinical conditions, lung function, quality of life, and rehabilitation**. It is a **multicenter study** that will soon be launched through ALAT’s REDCap platform.
- The “Molecular Diagnostics Summit: Barriers to Molecular Diagnosis of Pulmonary TB”

was also held. In the months leading up to this event, joint meetings were conducted among experts from different Latin American countries. Through the development of PICO questions (population/problem, intervention, comparison, outcome), various challenges and potential solutions related to the molecular diagnosis of TB were addressed and developed, some of which were presented during the summit at the congress. The conclusions of this initiative and the final report will be published shortly.

### **Clinical and Critical Care Department**

**By Dr. Sebastián Wustten, Coordinator of the Clinical and Critical Pulmonology Section, and Dr. Miguel Penizzotto**

#### **The Best of Interstitial Lung Diseases**

Two award-winning scientific studies were presented, providing innovative evidence in diffuse interstitial lung diseases (DILDs). The awarded study addressed the importance and usefulness of the biomarker KL-6 in patients with interstitial lung disease, based on a cohort of more than 900 patients in Spain. Progress on the REGINHA project the Ibero-American Registry of Hypersensitivity Pneumonitis, which includes more than 1,200 registered patients, was also discussed. This important registry is currently in the analysis phase, and the first results are expected to be available soon. The poster session reflected active scientific production in Latin America.

#### **Progressive Pulmonary Fibrosis in Connective Tissue Diseases**

This session addressed the relationship between autoimmune diseases and progressive pulmonary fibrosis. Cases of interstitial lung disease associated with systemic sclerosis, Sjögren's syndrome, inflammatory myopathies, and rheumatoid arthritis were discussed. The use of imaging, functional tests, and biomarkers for early detection was highlighted. Finally, the current and future role of antifibrotic therapies in this group of patients was evaluated.

#### **New Therapies for IPF and PPF**

Updates were presented on the recently published FIBRONEER-IPF and FIBRONEER-ILD studies regarding the efficacy and safety of nintedanib as a new antifibrotic treatment that

will soon be available for our patients. This new molecule shows promising results, although it is not yet commercially available in Latin America. Its potential impact on patients with progressive pulmonary fibrosis (PPF) and idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF) was analyzed. The discussion focused on improving accessibility and patient selection criteria.

#### **Interstitial Lung Disease Registries**

Experts highlighted the importance of having national and regional registries for interstitial lung diseases to better understand their epidemiology and improve clinical decision-making. REFIPI was presented as the first Latin American IPF registry, which demonstrates significant progress. They also introduced advancements in the Spanish registry and the emerging EPI-MIO registry for inflammatory myopathies. These registries allow for better patient characterization and foster international collaboration.

#### **Environmental Exposures and DILD**

Dr. Laura Alberti reviewed the latest data on hypersensitivity pneumonitis in Latin America, highlighting current diagnostic and treatment challenges. Dr. Annie Pardo addressed epigenetic mechanisms induced by environmental exposures and their role in the progression of DILD. There is increasing scientific evidence supporting the fact that environmental exposures can induce epigenetic modifications, which alter gene expression without changing the DNA sequence, and this may contribute to the development and progression of fibrosing interstitial lung diseases. The need to improve the identification of causal agents was emphasized. Preventive strategies and early diagnosis were central topics of the discussion.

#### **ALAT ILD–RA Guideline**

Dr. Laura Alberti presented the diagnostic and therapeutic guidelines for ILD associated with rheumatoid arthritis. This guideline emphasizes the protective role of methotrexate in patients with diffuse interstitial lung disease (DILD). It also provides answers to frequently asked questions regarding the management of DILD associated with rheumatoid arthritis. The need for rheumatology-pulmonology collaboration was emphasized. This document represents a regional step forward toward evidence-based medicine. It is expected to



be published soon by the Latin American Thoracic Association (ALAT).

### **Decoding Fibrosis**

Dr. Moisés Selman presented recent findings on fibrosis-associated comorbidities and molecular advances in pathophysiology. Dr. Lorena Noriega discussed emerging treatments for pulmonary fibrosis, evaluating future perspectives. The session concluded with questions addressing personalized approaches for patients with fibrosis.

### **Comprehensive Treatment of Patients with Interstitial Lung Disease**

Unmet needs, barriers to antifibrotic treatment, and opportunities for improvement in clinical practice were discussed. Dr. Ivette Buendía and Dr. Martín Fernández highlighted the importance of medical education, pulmonary rehabilitation, and a comprehensive approach to patients with interstitial lung disease. Insights derived from real-world patient cohorts were shared. Opportunities to expand indications and improve clinical efficacy were identified.

### **Sarcoidosis**

Dr. Jacobo Sellares presented an update on the diagnosis and clinical management of sarcoidosis. He highlighted new evidence supporting early use of methotrexate, supported by recent findings published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. Dr. Randall Rojas highlighted the role of imaging in assessing pulmonary involvement. Long-term follow-up and criteria for initiating immunosuppressive therapy were addressed. The workshop promoted a structured approach to differential diagnosis.

### **Challenges of Pulmonary Fibrosis**

Dr. Selman explained current pathophysiological mechanisms and risk factors associated with fibrosis. Dr. Jacobo Sellares complemented this with high-precision diagnostic methods and therapeutic strategies. The importance of a comprehensive and personalized approach was reinforced. The panel discussion allowed for comparison of clinical experiences from different countries.

As Secretary of the Interstitial Lung Disease Department, it was an honor to be part of the organization of this prestigious congress.

Events like this not only strengthen ties among colleagues throughout the region, but also drive advances in our knowledge and the quality of care we provide to our patients.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to all the speakers, moderators, and attendees for their commitment and enthusiasm.

We will continue working together to ensure that scientific excellence and collaboration remain the pillars of the development of our specialty.

**Department of Interstitial Lung Diseases (ILDs)**  
**By Dr. Santiago Auteri, a member of the section and Secretary of the Department of Interstitial Lung Diseases of the Latin American Thoracic Association (ALAT)**

**Coordinator of the educational-scientific project Academia EPI-ILD**

### **Presentation of the First 600 Patients from the Argentine Registry of Non-Cystic Fibrosis Bronchiectasis (ReBroAr)**

Sebastián Wustten presented a poster on the ReBroAr registry together with other co-authors, all of them members of the AAMR. The work was highly appreciated, as it represents the first registry in Latin America focused on this condition. Below are the most important results of the study:

- The first 600 patients in the registry were presented: 67% men and 33% women, with a mean age of 61 years.
  - The most frequent etiologies were post-infectious (25.1%), post-TB (20.7%), idiopathic (19.4%), COPD (10.3%), and asthma (7.8%).
  - At diagnosis, 44% of patients presented three symptoms (dyspnea, cough, and sputum production).
  - In CT scan, 15% had involvement of one lobe, 35% of the two lobes, and 50% three or more lobes.
  - Lung function testing showed an obstructive pattern in 52%, possible restriction in 32.8%, and normal findings in only 14.9%.
  - The most frequently isolated pathogen was *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (24.9%), while 51.1% of patients had no microbiological isolation.
  - 73% of patients experienced outpatient exacerbations, and 20% had at least one hospitalization.

- According to the E-FACED score, 52% were mild, 37% moderate, and 11% severe.
- A total of 87.2% patients were treated with inhalers, most commonly ICS + LABA (39.9%) and triple therapy (ICS + LABA + LAMA) in 17.5%.
- Azithromycin was part of the therapeutic regimen in 35% of cases.
- Miguel Penizzotto delivered a lecture on non-cystic fibrosis bronchiectasis, highlighting the evolution of knowledge on this condition and advances in novel therapeutic approaches.
- The directors of the ALAT Infections Department conveyed to AAMR members leading the ReBroAr initiative their intent to expand the registry by incorporating additional Latin American countries, aiming to establish a large regional registry on bronchiectasis. Both parties agreed to begin working together on this important project.