

## The *Uti possidetis* law: on Peruvian authors publishing in local journals

La ley del *Uti possidetis*: sobre autores peruanos que publican en revistas locales

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### Sr. Editor:

In 2002 and during our first expedition to the Mantaro valley in the central Andean region of Peru <sup>(1)</sup>, we did not realize that the problem of fascioliasis was extremely important, given the high rates of infection in humans and animals. After doing an extensive literature search about fascioliasis in Peru, we found several papers only published in local non-indexed journals and or abstracts of research studies presented in regional conferences. We realized that this parasitic infection has been neglected and forgotten. Two years later (2004), we did a trip to the southern Andean Region of Peru (Asillo, Puno), where we found that more than 60% of children were infected by *Fasciola hepatica*. This high prevalence was reported by our research group and was awarded the Abeefe Bristol Myers Squibb Laboratory in the Student-Intern category. This unfunded field trip helped us understand the tip of the iceberg and how a disease that is very prevalent reported for the first time in the early 1930's was still a problem (or have been always a problem but better diagnosed with new tools that we tested in the fields). Previously, only Naquira *et al.* in the Mantaro Valley and scarce data from the Junin region were available. Additional field research studies were performed by medical students and published in internationally recognized journals <sup>(2,3)</sup> with modest approval by the international community.

As we learnt about fascioliasis and other neglected tropical diseases during the 2000s, we realized that local data was reported by non-local investigators. Examples are the case of Stork *et al.* <sup>(4)</sup> which local data article took us more than 1 year to locate (the article was not available for the locals), or the most recent case of the epidemiological investigations by Gonzalez *et al.* <sup>(5)</sup> in the Mantaro Valley. Similarly, non-local authors have been included as first authors in other so-called neglected tropical diseases as is the case of tungiasis (Feldmeier in Brazil) with some exceptions (Tungiasis in Nigeria). It seems that research developed by local authorities has not been consistent, which is of concern given the need for the local government to develop their own research and treatment guidelines for each disease that affect their own population.

Peru is a country with a wide variety of diseases which is likely the reflexion of its diverse geography: coast, highlands and rainforest. Some autochthonous diseases

such as *Bartonella bacilliformis* infection first described in Peru in 1907 and leaded by Maguiña have not suffered the same doom. Other clear examples are neurocysticercosis by Garcia, gnathostomiasis which is led by Bravo, or HTLVI by Gotuzzo, local authors who have published local data in local (and international) journals. It is for this reason that the indexation of the *Peruvian Journal of Parasitology* is not only an important achievement of a group of parasitologists to generate science, but a scientific responsibility of all of us, local authors, most of the time unfunded or partially funded, that struggle to publish with the only goal of control the multiple diseases among which we live. The ideal scenario is that if other non- local investigators are willing to participate and finally intervene in the public health policies, local researchers would lead the research. The *Uti possidetis* law says: the territory where someone lives, for as long as he or she has lived there, belongs to the people who have lived there. At the very end, knowledge is universal and does not belong to anyone. But there are barriers and common sense. Breaking language barriers (English is for now the scientific language used universally), and indexing more journals in international repositories and electronical libraries must be a priority of all of us.

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