

## REPORTING THE EXPERIENCE OF THE REOPENING OF AN ACADEMIC LEAGUE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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**Abstract: Purpose:** To report the experience lived by students and professors of the Medicine course in the reopening of an otorhinolaryngology league. **Method:** This text reports the experience of the Academic League of Otorhinolaryngology (LAOTO) of the medical school at the Universidade do Vale do Itajaí (UNIVALI), which reopened its activities in the context of the pandemic. **Results:** To emphasize the outcomes through the observation of data on the functioning of the academic leagues of Medicine of the Universidade do Vale do Itajaí in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. **Final considerations:** After a year in the virtual environment, negative points can be punctuated - such as the impossibility of carrying out practical activities and creating new interpersonal relationships - and positive ones - such as the expansion of the league to locations throughout Brazil with information technologies. It is concluded that LAOTO will return to holding meetings in a physical environment as soon as allowed, however, many instruments used during social isolation to increase the league's reach will be continued, creating a new method in a post-pandemic world.

**Keywords:** Faculty of Medicine; alloys; Pandemic; COVID-19; Otorhinolaryngology.

## INTRODUCTION

Academic leagues are student organizations promoted by students and supervised by professors that aim to improve and deepen knowledge of a particular area, in order to meet the demands of students through extracurricular activities. One of the great advantages of academic leagues is the possibility of choosing topics by the students themselves. Within these organizations, there is a range of teaching possibilities, spanning classes, lectures, journeys, supervised field practices, scientific research and congresses

(ANDREONI *et al.*, 2019).

The studies carried out by Goergen DI (2017) show that in the current situation the interest of students in leagues is increasing, and consequently, they progressively grow in number and members. It is understood that they are guided by the principles of the university tripod: teaching, research and extension (GOERGEN DI, 2017).

The Academic League of Otorhinolaryngology (LAOTO), of the medical school at the Universidade do Vale do Itajaí (UNIVALI), was originally founded in 2018, with the aim of promoting greater dissemination of knowledge in the otorhinolaryngology area, as well as bringing the academics in this context of medical practice. After a few semesters, there was a need to reduce the number of leagues active within the medical course, thus causing the closure of LAOTO's activities. However, in the second half of 2020, five academics from the seventh period of medicine, who were undergoing the discipline of otorhinolaryngology, felt the urge to deepen their knowledge in the area, and so they reopened LAOTO with the support of collaborating professors.

Faced with the COVID-19 pandemic and all its social distancing implications (AQUINO *et al.*, 2020) the teaching methods of academic leagues were generally restricted to virtual environments. In this sense, the interest in reporting the experience of the Academic League of Otorhinolaryngology meets the current moment of distancing, propagating network knowledge of the teaching possibilities already successfully carried out in practice in this league, a purpose of sharing knowledge.

Finally, this study aims to report the experience lived by students and professors of the Medicine course in the reopening of an otorhinolaryngology league in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Several

adaptations were made for the league to continue operating; thus, the report is born from the authors' personal desire to share the experience of how the activities were carried out and the impacts of this new methodology for the academics.

## **METHOD**

This is a descriptive study of the experience report type that shows the importance of scientific narrative as a method that, through language, performs the experience of singularization (DALTRO, 2019).

Experienced by academics of the third year of the Medicine course at the Universidade do Vale do Itajaí, this experience report seeks, through the description of its functioning, to discuss the reopening of an academic league in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the impacts of the new methodology in the teaching/learning of the students and professors of the university.

## **RESULTS**

At UNIVALI, the academic leagues are coordinated by the Academic Center of Medicine, which has a group of selected students who together form the Coordinating Committee of Academic Leagues. This commission aims to establish norms and monitor the leagues during the semester. Thus, the league that grants the necessary documentation, holds at least five meetings per semester and annually fulfills the research and extension objectives is considered valid. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for social distancing described by Aquino *et al* (2020), the entire reopening process and meetings were carried out online.

With regard to LAOTO, during the year 2020 and 2021, ten lectures were given on various topics of otorhinolaryngology, which were chosen according to the demand of the participants of the league and suggestions

from the coordinators or speakers. In these meetings there was interaction between academics and speakers, through questions and sharing of personal experiences. Digital platforms were chosen for the transmission of classes that allow this presenter/spectator interaction, such as Google Meet, Blackboard Platform, among others. During the meetings, the managers of the league, the participating academics, the guiding professors and the chosen speaker were present. Attendances were controlled by the Check-in SERPRO application, which were recorded at the end of each meeting in minutes to control the presence of members, who had to have at least 75% attendance for certification.

Virtual communication tools in times of a pandemic have opened communication horizons, being responsible for connecting people from anywhere in the world, contributing to the acquisition and sharing of experiences. According to Lima (2020), not using this tool for communicating information and updates is a wasted opportunity. LAOTO managed to greatly expand its reach, and members had the opportunity to get in touch with speakers from the most diverse areas of Brazil, which would hardly have been possible with the previous model. The dialogue with distant professionals brought new opportunities to academics, such as the invitation to carry out post pandemic internships. During the year there was great communication with other academic leagues of otorhinolaryngology in Brazil, with classes and other activities being held together, allowing the exchange of experiences and new knowledge.

## **DISCUSSION**

Academic leagues are environments with a more informal character, which soften the hierarchy of the relationship between students and teachers (GOERGEN DI, 2017). This

way, learning takes place in a more pleasant way and amidst the creation of egalitarian methodologies. The area of education suffered a great impact from the pandemic, having to adapt in ways never imagined before, giving new meaning to the ways of obtaining knowledge. As far as academic leagues are concerned, they had to migrate to the virtual environment, in an attempt to keep up to date on academic matters, thus being able to mitigate intellectual losses (GOH PS and SANDARS J, 2020).

In this context, the positive and negative findings of the virtual environment for the execution of activities are highlighted. As described by Moretti-Pires *et al* (2021), the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted issues that have already been discussed previously in medical education, such as the focus on professional training through the traditional model and its limitations. Given the situation, one can evaluate in practice the benefits and harms, with regard to academic leagues, of remote teaching during graduation.

The practicality of the method was pointed out as a positive point, as explained by Goh&Sandars (2020), which addresses the “anytime anywhere” aspect that the use of technologies offers. The ease of participating in the meetings through any device connected to the internet made it possible to change their schedule, which used to be held during the school day, to the night shift, bringing more comfort to academics. The league was able to count on a higher average number of members, as the limit of binders imposed by face-to-face activities in classrooms was ended. In addition, the virtual environment expanded the organization’s reach, which increased the interaction with other courses and universities from various regions of the country, as in addition to more participants in the medicine course, academics from the speech therapy course were invited to join the

league, encouraging interprofessionalism and knowledge construction.

However, as stated by Santos *et al* (2020), the speed with which the adaptations took place can generate intellectual gaps in students. The interruption of all practical activities, essential to improve the theoretical learning acquired, can be highlighted as harmful. It is a great challenge for teachers to reproduce the experience acquired in clinical meetings (GOH PS and SANDARS J, 2020). In addition, Santos *et al* (2020) emphasizes that the impossibility of interpersonal relationships in a physical environment produces negative effects for students, who suffer from skills in the area of medical humanities, necessary for the formation of good professionals.

Within this new context, the lack of face-to-face contact between the league members made interpersonal relationships to a certain extent diminish or get lost. The online environment gave space to a “new language” through codes aimed at trying to fill the absence of the non-verbal. According to Carla Pontes Donnamaria (2012) it is still necessary for studies to focus on these issues of relationships, in order to elucidate the real consequences of this differentiation between this “new language” of the virtual environment, or the damage it can bring due to the absence, partial or total, of the non-verbal cues.

## CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the teaching context in the academic field: the virtual environment has prevailed over the face-to-face. In this context, the reopening of an academic league at the Universidade do Vale do Itajaí in the face of the scenario of social isolation brought positive and negative points for UNIVALI teachers, organizers and academics.

It was possible to bring different points of view, different content during the course of the league, and also connection of professionals from other states. New means for holding meetings and creating bonds between students from all over the country were used, without limits of borders or spaces. Thus, the importance of such ease in the dissemination of knowledge, which was not commonly used before the pandemic, is highlighted.

However, despite the ease of communication and integration of knowledge that the virtual environment provides, the distance due to

the COVID-19 pandemic brought negative consequences to the reduction of interpersonal relationships, in addition to the loss of the practical aspect of classes, which made face-to-face meetings attractive to academics.

This way, it is concluded that the physical and traditional model must return as soon as possible, but much of what has been done in a virtual environment must remain and has the potential to make academic leagues grow and be valued more and more, thus creating a new model of academic leagues in the post-pandemic world.

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