

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Study of Delays in Diagnosing Symptomatic Pulmonary Tuberculosis

To the editor: It was with pleasure that I read the article by Altet et al,¹ "Study of Delays in Diagnosing Symptomatic Pulmonary Tuberculosis" published in ARCHIVOS DE BRONCONEUMOLOGÍA. I would like to congratulate the authors on their detailed study and thank them for calling attention to the important problem of tuberculosis in our country. In a study published in *Revista Clínica Española*² in 1986, colleagues and I called attention to this same problem. Ours was a retrospective study with a total of 1307 patients and theirs a prospective study of 267 patients, but despite the methodological differences the conclusions were quite similar—we too drew attention to the problems of lack of information on the part of patients, of awareness on the part of

doctors, and of effective screening programs on the part of health authorities, as well as the scant use made of bacteriology. It is interesting to note that delays were shorter in the study by Altet and colleagues, but we must remember that 17 years separated the 2 studies, and that delays could be shorter still.

In spite of this, the authors' conclusions are very similar to ours, as they indicate that patients should be given health information, that health authorities should try to improve screening programs, and that doctors should continue to be suspicious of tuberculosis. All of these conclusions coincide completely with what we stated in 1986.

In our study we drew particular attention to the scant use of bacteriology, which was not used in the study of Altet and colleagues either. We think the authors may not have included it because of the rapid methods of diagnosing tuberculosis we have available today.^{3,4}

Again, we would like to thank the authors for their detailed study of the types of delays in diagnosis. We are also concerned that in the twenty-first century they are still a source of problems for controlling tuberculosis in

our country and that Spain is still one of the countries in Europe with the highest incidence of the disease.

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