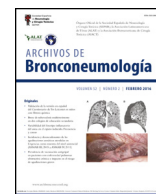




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## Letter to the Editor

### COVID-19 and Smoking: An Opportunity to Quit... When Vaccinated!



### COVID-19 y fumar: una oportunidad para dejar de fumar... cuando se vacunan

To the Director:

We have read with interest the article by Pastor Esplà et al. and we agree with the authors that smoking is a risk factor for severe clinical course of COVID-19.<sup>1</sup> To this respect we have also to consider that among patients hospitalized for SARS-CoV-2 related pneumonia, the prevalence of active smokers is very low, whatever the country we consider, from China to Europe and United States of America.<sup>2,3</sup>

There is a critical difference between the role of smoking (current/former) in the severe outcomes in COVID-19 and the quite low prevalence of active smokers among patients hospitalized for COVID-19. This is a very important issue since in the first case we all agree that smokers have more severe outcomes in COVID-19 probably due to the many comorbidities affecting smokers (active/former). In the second case, *i.e.* the low prevalence of current smokers among patients hospitalized for COVID-19, the main point is that current smoking seem to be “protective” towards the SARS-CoV-2 induced severe clinical complications.

To this respect there are data showing that among COVID-19 patients, significantly more former smokers were hospitalized and died from COVID-19 than current or never smokers.<sup>4</sup> Thus there is the need to understand the possible mechanisms allowing cigarette smoking to dampen the inflammatory response during infection by SARS-CoV-2 strongly reducing the severe complications of SARS-CoV-2 infection, mainly interstitial pneumonia and ARDS.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, we fully agree with Pastor Esplà et al. in considering each occasion as a useful opportunity to quit smoking,<sup>1</sup> thus reducing its well known unhealthy consequences. But considering the present SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, the lack of effective pharmacological treatments, and the reported ‘protective’ effects of active smoking towards severe COVID-19 complications, smoke cessation in current smokers could be suggested after SARS-CoV-2 vaccination!

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