

Overcoming the Impossible: My Journey of Resilience, Faith, Opportunities, and Accomplished Dreams



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I had never faced challenging moments until I had a car accident on my way to school on November 21st, 2023. This accident resulted in whiplash syndrome that felt endless. The whiplash caused significant issues in my life, including vertigo, constant headaches, hyperreflexia, paresthesias, and tinnitus, primarily affecting the left side of my body due to problems with the C5 and C6 vertebrae, where cervical kyphosis and a herniated spinal disc were discovered. At one point, I even considered delaying my tests because the doctors believed my condition would require surgery with a permanent cervical plate. Amidst my medical treatment and personal struggles that affected my quality of life, I felt as if anxiety and depression were overwhelming me, causing my plans to seem even further away.

Despite this, I have always considered myself a person of faith, and my experiences have fostered resilience within me. I continually seek opportunities for personal, spiritual, and professional growth to become exceptional. With this mindset, I fought to continue my studies despite the pain and my impaired mental and physical health because I had a clear goal: to become a physician worthy of treating patients and, ultimately, a great pediatric oncologist.

One day, as I was walking out of class, I noticed an activity organized by the “Asociación Mexicana de Médicos en Formación” (AMMEF), which featured a “Be The Match” event that helps people with hematological conditions, including leukemia. Without hesitation, I offered to volunteer. It felt like a dream come true! I have always wanted to assist in organizations that support this cause. One week later, I attended the Committee's Fair, where we discussed various opportunities for growth and development. My goal was clear: research.

Since starting college, I envisioned engaging in research, as I believe it's essential for progress in evidence-based medicine. However, being young and inexperienced, I felt there was little chance of publishing research as an undergraduate. Nevertheless, I shared my plans with the person in charge of the Standing Committee on Medical Publications (SCOMP), and to my delight, he welcomed me with open arms.

I then had the chance to participate in the fourth edition of “Innovation, Research and Advocacy,” representing my local committee, CAEM UAEH. Participation was typically limited to the Local Officers of Medical Publications, so being allowed to take part as a new active member felt like a privilege.

I remember responding with a resounding “YES!” and a sparkle in my eyes – finally, I had a chance! Although fear of my lack of experience in research lingered, my hunger for growth and achievement pushed me forward.

I immersed myself in every video of the “Course on Drafting and Elaboration of Investigation Protocols” (CREPI), striving to give my best effort. Thankfully, I had an exceptional team by my side, filled with friends who supported me despite my limited experience. I learned so much from them, and they gave me the confidence I needed. We still collaborate on various projects to this day, and they were the first friends I made through AMMEF. Our investigation protocol ultimately earned us third place in the edition.

My desire for growth was just beginning when another opportunity arose: to become a Local Officer on Medical Publications (LOMP). At first, it seemed like a far-fetched idea that I could be elected to such a competitive local committee, but I tried anyway and was elected!

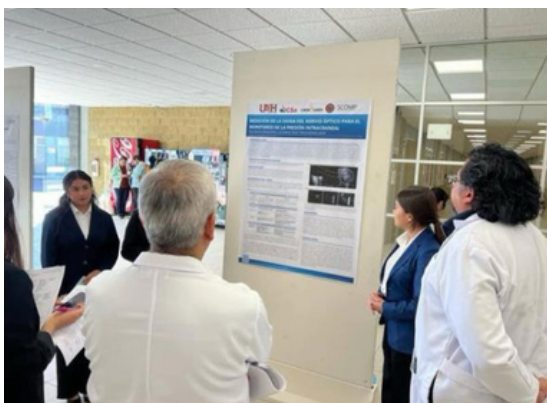
Later, I received another opportunity to be a delegate at the XVI National Assembly of AMMEF in Chihuahua, Mexico. Upon learning about the benefits, I didn’t hesitate. I spoke to my parents, who are my most loyal supporters and purchased my ticket.

This was my first National Assembly, and I participated in everything I could: the XX National Competition of Scientific Research Posters, where I presented my clinical case and transformed my tragedy into a scientific poster. While I didn’t win, I appreciated the courage I found within myself, despite lacking experience, as it helped inspire many students who approached me. I felt my purpose was fulfilled. I was also part of the Research and Epidemiology Team during the Assembly. I made sure to attend every social event, which was a challenge since I was not accustomed to staying out late and ended up sleeping very few hours to prepare for the next day. A humorous moment occurred during an activity held by SCOMP in collaboration with SCORE, where we were assigned the quirky topic of “The cows’ aerodynamics” for a Scientific Poster Workshop, yet we still managed to win.



The AMMEF, ChihuhuAN, and SCOMP became my chosen family and changed my life for the better. They reignited my dreams and helped me accomplish goals I once thought were impossible. In just six months, I have participated in extensive research and formed friendships with students from various states in Mexico and different academic years. Some Local Officers and I continue to meet for inter-committee activities, forming a team dubbed “LOMPsitos Team.” We created a webpage to showcase all of our activities, and we have become great friends. My Active Members and my Local Team provide unwavering support.

When I initially received the Standing Committee on Medical Publications, there were no activities planned, but that quickly changed. We now have over 90 Active Members dedicated to research. We have submitted articles to various journals, including indexed ones! I organized the First Local Competition of Scientific Research Posters at my university, featuring high-prestige researchers, including a national researcher recognized in the third degree of the National System of Researchers (SNI). The winners in each category were given the opportunity to publish in an indexed journal. Faculty, students, and even the families of participants attended the event, providing motivation and support.



Nothing makes me prouder or happier than helping fellow students who share my goal of finding opportunities for medical students to grow and develop. In the end, surgery was not required, and I achieved far more than I had ever dreamed; I gained more than I lost. Every tear shed was met with laughter, and every frustration turned into triumph and desire. I realize I have often used the word "opportunity," but that encapsulates life—endeavoring to overcome fear and challenges, even when something seems impossible. What would have happened if I had given up at that moment?

As a quote suggests, “In order to attain the impossible, one must attempt the absurd,” which may be attributed to either the Spanish writer Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra or South African former president Nelson Mandela, who said, “It always seems impossible until it's done.”

Lastly, I would like to leave you with this phrase of my creation: “May the pursuit of research transform us into the physicians worthy of treating our patients.” - Hannia Andrea Vera Rodriguez

