

Editorial

Acta Orthopaedica Scandinavica

Sixtieth Anniversary

The preface to the first issue of *Acta Orthopaedica Scandinavica* in 1930 explained the reason for founding the journal:

"The cooperation of the physicians of the Northern countries is based not only on a mutual linguistic understanding but also on the similarity of the medical training in the Scandinavian countries. Notably as regards orthopedics, its Scandinavian practitioners have, by their elaboration of foreign ideas and working methods, and by their own experiences, founded a Scandinavian orthopedic school. In order to give an external expression to our unity, we have joined in issuing the present periodical."

After having published some 40,000 pages of articles, reviews, case reports, supplements, and congress abstracts by three generations of orthopedic scientists and practitioners, it seems timely to explore whether or not our journal has served its purpose: Is there, indeed, a Scandinavian orthopedic school? With the overwhelming plethora of international travel, meetings, and journals, it would seem meaningless to single out national or regional profiles in the commonwealth of orthopedic knowledge. The arthrotic hip, the herniated disc, the fractured tibia, the rheumatoid hand do not carry passports.

Still, the pages of *Acta Orthopaedica Scandinavica* do express certain characteristics that stand out in an international context.

First, no other orthopedic journal has survived to become truly international with a domestic market so much smaller than that enjoyed in the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Japan.

Secondly, our authors have been exceptionally persistent in following up large case materials. Already in the first issue, Guildal and Sodemann described the 2-year results of 256 triple arthrodeses of the foot in polio with a follow-up loss of only 4 percent. Likewise, Harald Nilsson published a table comprising all of his observations in 56 cases of coxa valga in polio, and Wahren published a comprehensive table of 42 cases of scoliosis in sciatica. The tradition of handling large clinical materials has had an important expression in the thesis supplements to *Acta Orthopaedica Scandinavica*, for

example, classics like Jerre's (1950) on physiologic of the hip and Danielsson's (1964) on the natural history of coxarthrosis. Today, this tradition is producing national multicenter studies with continuous follow-up of some 80,000 total hips and 25,000 knee arthroplasties that provide unique comparisons of indications, implants, and operative procedures, and equally important, valid expressions of the quality of orthopedic care and the costs—and benefits—to society.

Epidemiologic studies of this scope have contributed to the political base, which explains the strong academic and community-integrated position of orthopedics in Scandinavia today.

Whereas the majority of orthopedic surgeons prefer "clinical" articles, the distinction between animal experiments and the practice of orthopedics becomes blurred in a 60-year perspective. The article by Wahren in our first issue described the effects of lumbar disc herniation before this mechanism was understood; our present routines for diagnosis and treatment of the condition are founded on decades of experimentation, clinical and basic. Postoperative infection of hip and knee arthroplasty has dropped from 15 to 0.5 percent in 20 years; the early arthroplasty experiments involved dramatic losses of life and limb. This is the background of our policy of freely accepting reports on laboratory research, reflecting also the fact that a majority of the academic leaders in Scandinavian orthopedics have spent a large part of their formative years in the laboratory.

In their preface, our founding fathers stated that their Scandinavian Orthopedic School was based not only on regional cooperation and experience, but also on the "elaboration of foreign ideas and working methods." This tradition, has characterized *Acta Orthopaedica Scandinavica* throughout 60 years of publication, substantially strengthened when the Netherlands Orthopedic Society joined the *Acta* family in 1979, which doubled the population base. Because the Scandinavian and the Dutch languages are spoken by small populations, our orthopedic leaders have had to communicate in German, French, and English to escape inbreeding. Last year,

80 percent of the references in *Acta Orthopaedica Scandinavica* quoted foreign journals, a quarter of our articles originate from outside our native lands, and in recent years the supplements have also attracted foreign authors. In fact, the hopes and aspirations that went into the founding of our journal have been fulfilled by *Acta Orthopaedica Scandinavica*, having broken the isolation of relatively small population groups. As a "clearing house" of information, we contribute to the common pool of knowledge.

In the celebration of our anniversary, we are excited by current events. This issue is the fourth produced by desktop computers handled by the staff of our Editorial Office. This means shorter production time, improved utilization of journal space, and, hopefully, lower production costs. Our team of editors have agreed to match these technical advances with more rapid manuscript review: most submissions should be answered within 2 months, and articles will be printed within 6 months of acceptance. These technical and organizational improvements include closer participation of our authors in the production of our journal: the final versions of the articles and supplements are usually delivered to the journal on computer discs, and overseas proofs are returned by telefax.

Although the contents and production procedures of *Acta Orthopaedica Scandinavica* have changed over the years, we have stubbornly resisted changing the format and the cover. During recent years, however, we have pioneered colored illustrations, and the supplements regularly have had distinctive cover designs, with the proceedings' supplements bright red. We hope our readers will be pleased that we

have now mustered strength to also change the cover of the regular issues. Our new cover has been chosen to give individual identity to each issue, with continuity provided by the logotype.

Finally, in a comparison of the 1930 and 1990 versions of *Acta Orthopaedica Scandinavica*, the most striking difference is the development of multiple authorship. In Volume 1, all but one of the 43 articles had single authors—all orthopedists. In this issue, most of the articles have three or four authors; a few years ago we even had a case report with 8 authors! Multiple authorship in this degree may be open to ridicule. But in fact, this trend is an expression of the team approach to modern orthopedics in which the surgeon, the radiologist, the pathologist, the epidemiologist, and others all have crucial roles. *Acta Orthopaedica Scandinavica* will continue to record and contribute to the development of our specialty into an area of cross-fertilization of the sciences.

References

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