

EDITORIAL

Acta has now issued Supplementum No. 200; the Editorial Board wishes to focus attention on this sector of our journal by printing a list of all supplements issued since 1934.

For 50 years subscribers to *Acta Orthopaedica Scandinavica* have received an average of four supplements annually, peaking at ten supplements per year in the late 1960's. Over the last 30 years the total number of supplement pages equals that of the regular issues of Acta. By sheer volume, the supplements thus constitute an important part of our journal. In terms of content the supplements represent a unique feature in the publication of orthopaedic research, both clinical and experimental; the majority of the supplements are academic theses, presented and defended at the Scandinavian medical schools. A thesis represents some four years or more of research work, and their quality is guaranteed by the traditions of the orthopaedic departments, and the academic ideology in Scandinavia. The supplements reflect the evolution of that tradition.

The early supplements were often 200 pages or more, and the authors had usually done their work in isolation. Today the supplements comprise around 60 pages, and they are usually products of team work, with close collaboration of senior and junior scientists.

When a thesis is made up of several articles, senior scientists usually appear among the authors, whereas the classic supplement has only one author, the thesis candidate. The list of titles of supplements reveals, however, that these latter theses do not represent neophyte contributions, but more often reflect deep-rooted research traditions in various academic centres. For example, a series of growth cartilage studies from Finland reflect continuous research projects led by Langenskiöld; similar studies from Lund are products of Lars Ingvar Hansson's teamwork; the Gothenburg theses project decades of work on the spine, directed by Hirsch and Nachemson. Children's orthopaedics have a strong basis in Denmark; Norwegian theses reflect the importance of local factors in the etiology and treatment of congenital dislocation of the hip. The Scandinavian thesis tradition is an effective mechanism for recruiting young orthopaedic surgeons into ongoing research projects; the would-be scientist is assured a meaningful problem, equipment, and technical assistance; the senior scientist has access to fresh brain power; the project grows in new directions; the department is assured continuity in research, teaching and patient care.

The list of supplements published here reflects the firm grip of the thesis system on Scandinavian orthopaedics. In fact, nearly all chairmen of the clinical departments of orthopaedics in Scandinavia started their careers doing experimental research; one third of all orthopaedic surgeons in Sweden have done postgraduate research, clinical or experimental, culminating in the publication of a thesis. The interplay between experimental and clinical research in Scandinavian orthopaedics is vividly mirrored in the titles of the supplements.

Some of the supplements have already found a niche in the history of orthopaedics, notably Walldius' publication in 1957 of endoprosthetic arthroplasty of the knee. Others are often quoted classics, for example Jerre's 1950 study of the slipped upper

femoral epiphysis, and Alffram's and Danielsson's 1964 epidemiologic studies of fracture of the hip and coxarthrosis. Von Rosen's 1939 study of the infectious diseases of the patella, Kettunen's and Kallio's 1958 studies of skin arthroplasty of the hip joint, and several supplements on scoliosis are examples of the drastic changes in disease patterns and surgical techniques that have occurred during a professional life span.

The supplements have confronted problems rather than the bulk of clinical practice. Fractures are underrepresented as compared with the number of supplements devoted to clinical problems of the back and hip, and as much as 40 percent of the past 200 supplements describe experimental work on the musculo-skeletal system.

Acta Orthopaedica Scandinavica has already issued Supplementum No. 201, and several more are planned. The Board of Editors have decided to increase their support of the supplement section; they will welcome the non-thesis type of supplements, notably reviews in depth of orthopaedic problems, long-term follow-ups of clinical material, and comprehensive accounts of experimental research. The supplements are distributed without extra cost to the subscribers; two thirds of Acta are circulated outside Scandinavia.

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