

NORDISK ORTOPEDISK FÖRENING NORDIC ORTHOPAEDIC ASSOCIATION 60th Anniversary

This year the Nordisk Ortopedisk Förening (NOF) (the Nordic Orthopaedic Association) celebrates its 60th anniversary and in view of the long and close co-operation between the society and *Acta Orthopaedica Scandinavica* the editorial committee would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the occasion.

The founding of NOF is closely associated with the development of orthopaedics in the Nordic countries and it is fitting to give a short description of this.

An outstanding feature of Scandinavian orthopaedics is its origin in social service. During the latter part of the 19th century there was a growing interest in assisting young disabled persons by providing them with a practical education in special centres and thereby ensuring them a means of employment. The foremost advocate of these ideas was the Danish clergyman, Hans Knudsen, and on the basis of his conceptions persons engaged in social work in the Nordic countries founded societies which undertook the organization of such institutions.

The clientele was mixed, being mostly cases of congenital deformities, infantile paralysis, and disability after accident. It was often necessary to correct deformities in these patients, and it was soon obvious that beds would have to be provided in direct co-operation with the social institutions. The medical side of this undertaking gradually intensified and, even if progress developed along slightly different lines in the various Nordic countries, ward facilities were substantially increased during the first decades of the 20th century. Clinics were set up and orthopaedics had gained a firm footing. The senior doctors in these clinics came to play an important role in the development of the orthopaedic team.

Another orthopaedic departure was in the field of tuberculosis. The disease was widespread in Scandinavia and was justifiably considered a major public health problem. Determined efforts were therefore made to treat these patients. Even on this occasion the social commitment of the individual played an important part in the establishment of specialized hospitals. The doctors in charge of these hospitals quickly adapted to the treatment of cases involving bone surgery, and they too became pioneers in orthopaedic surgery. Both these groups of doctors were joined by yet another circle from which orthopaedic surgeons were recruited. These were the general surgeons who within their field of work had developed a special interest in bone surgery.

World War I had a definite influence on the development of orthopaedics in Europe and America. The vast numbers of critically injured, including amputees, who required treatment and rehabilitation lent more and more significance to the speciality. Its profile became more pronounced and, as a consequence, the orthopaedic surgeons began to form national societies. Also in Scandinavia representatives of this young speciality considered the time was ripe to assert themselves through their own society. It was agreed to found a joint Nordic association because at the time there was no basis for national societies, the orthopaedic groups in the individual countries being too small.

On the initiative of H. C. Sloman, Denmark, Patrik Haglund and Sven Johansson, Sweden, 19 orthopaedic representatives gathered in Gothenburg and founded the Nordic Orthopaedic Association. Patrik Haglund was chosen as first president, an appointment he

well deserved, whilst H. C. Sloman was similarly acknowledged as host at the forthcoming meeting in Copenhagen.

It would have been of interest to give a detailed resumé of the activities of NOF since its inception, but space requires its restriction to a short review.

At first the annual meetings were conducted without ceremony. Meetings were held at one of the orthopaedic clinics in Scandinavia and the lectures given were almost entirely of a clinical nature. Compilations of clinical material were presented and practical problems discussed. To a great extent these had to do with investigations of various congenital deformities and bone tuberculosis, but now and then there were lectures on fractures. It should be remembered that at that time most of the members were older, established doctors who were not particularly involved in basic research.

Congress reports up to World War II show a gradual increase in the number of participants and papers, and the progress of orthopaedics was reflected in the programmes. Discussions were mostly concerned with new methods of surgery and their results, and it can be clearly seen that the speciality was becoming more and more surgically orientated.

NOF's activity was suspended during the war years when countries were cut off from each other, but afterwards development was almost explosive with an even greater emphasis on surgery. It can also be seen from the society's protocols and published proceedings that basic research was gaining more and more importance. Another notable change in the choice of meeting topics occurred when, during the fifties and sixties, orthopaedic surgeons in Scandinavia took over from general surgeons in the treatment of fractures. In the twenties only 10 per cent of the papers dealt with fractures, whilst during the last 20 years this figure has increased to 35 per cent.

For many years NOF and the Nordic Surgical Society held joint meetings, but at the end of the forties it was decided to separate—one of the reasons being that the joint congresses had become so large that personal contact was being lost. Nowadays

NOF hold their congresses independently every other year, and up to now meetings have rotated between four of the Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. Iceland has so far not acted as host country.

During its 60 years' existence the Society has steadily increased its membership. The original 40 members have now grown to 600 and there is no longer a preponderance of older members—which has become noticeable, also at the congress banquets. In the Society's early days these were exclusively male gatherings, but this changed with the influx of younger members. Ladies were admitted and nowadays the banquets—greatly enhanced by the feminine element—are highly appreciated.

NOF has meant a great deal to relations between Scandinavian orthopaedic surgeons. The personal contacts established during the congresses have led to enduring friendships which have been of the utmost importance for inter-Nordic co-operation. The meetings have first and foremost been influential in the exchange of practical knowledge, but frequently they have instituted collaboration on the research level. The growth of Scandinavian co-operation through NOF covers many areas, e.g., evaluation by neighbouring experts of academic questions, such as appointments of professors in orthopaedics.

One of the most important achievements in the history of both NOF and *Acta Orthopaedica Scandinavica* has been, of course, the co-operation between the society and the journal. Many of the 40 orthopaedists practising in Scandinavia when NOF was founded in 1919 had previously published their scientific papers in *Acta Chirurgica Scandinavica*, which was natural considering their surgical origins. Already during the twenties there was talk of whether orthopaedic surgery should have its own journal. P. G. K. Bentzon of Denmark, a driving force in Scandinavian orthopaedics, enthused his colleagues with the idea, with the result that *Acta Orthopaedica Scandinavica* was launched in 1929.

Initially, the journal was quite independent and run by an editorial committee. NOF's interest in the journal prompted the decision to

take it over in 1952. The consequent economic stability had a positive influence on the quality of the journal and the co-operation established between NOF and *Acta* has been invaluable. The society's members obtained a reliable forum for their scientific publications whose standard has contributed to making *Acta Orthopaedica Scandinavica* internationally known and respected.

The editors have every reason to look back with gratitude on the years during which the Association and *Acta Orthopaedica Scandinavica* have worked together and would like to express the hope that the mutual understanding of our common problems will continue in the future.

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