

ESPE – The First 50 Years
A History of the European Society for Paediatric Endocrinology

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A History of the European Society for Paediatric Endocrinology

Editor

Wolfgang G. Sippell Kiel

on behalf of the ESPE Council

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Foreword

It is an honour and pleasure for us, the ESPE Secretary General (F.C.) and the President for the 50th ESPE Meeting (C.K.) to contribute a Foreword to this book, which has been commissioned and published to mark this important anniversary for our Society.

We would like to thank Wolfgang Sippell whose idea this was, and who has worked tirelessly to bring the project to fruition in a timely manner. Our thanks also to all Society members who have contributed the reminiscences that follow, and to those whose support has made publication possible, especially Jeff Bolton and Hartmut Wollmann (Pfizer), Anne-Marie Kappelgaard (Novo Nordisk) and Thomas Nold (Karger Publishers).

It is interesting that a Society of the size which ESPE has now become still (as is also clear from many of the following contributions) inspires feelings of being part of a family rather than of an impersonal organisation. Like a family, ESPE has grown dramatically over two generations. We look forward to welcoming around 3,500 delegates to the ESPE 50th Meeting, in contrast to Professor Andrea Prader and the handful of other pioneers at the first meeting in Zurich. Several of the latter are, happily, still with us and present in Glasgow as guests of the Society.

As ESPE has grown in size, it has also developed an increasingly wide range of educational and scientific activities, all of which have been designed, ultimately, to improve care for children and young people with endocrine disorders, not only in Europe but worldwide. The diversity of these activities can be seen by accessing the Society's website (www.eurospe.org), but perhaps we may also be allowed a few personal remarks here.

For one of us (F.C.), the first experience of ESPE was at the Annual Meeting in 1984, organised by Dieter Schönberg in Heidelberg. Since then, as a young paediatric endocrinologist, I was very glad and proud to attend the Annual Meetings (every year) of what I considered, already at that time, the best meetings in Paediatric Endocrinology anywhere in the world. My University colleagues and I aimed to show our best data at ESPE meetings and prepared thoroughly to present and debate our findings.

For many years I dreamt of contributing to ESPE as a Council member. After 2001, when I was elected to Council at the Joint Meeting in Montreal, Martin Savage was a

very supportive and kind mentor to me and I learned a lot from his leadership of the Society. In 2003 I was honoured to be elected as Secretary General, initially to serve the Society from 2004 to 2007. In those 3 years, together with Council, I worked hard to modernise the Society, to spread information about ESPE around the world and to attract members from countries outside Europe. This has particularly come to fruition during my second term (2007–2010): approximately 15% of members are now from non-European countries making ESPE one of the most scientifically significant paediatric endocrinology societies worldwide. ESPE Annual Meetings are now very well attended with more than 2,000 delegates coming from more than 90 countries.

I was asked by Council and members to stay one more year as Secretary General until the Glasgow meeting, which marks the 50th Annual Meeting of ESPE, and I accepted with pleasure. I am in no doubt that ESPE has influenced my professional (and personal) life very much, and I will continue to serve our Society in the future, doing my best to help Lars Sävendahl, the new Secretary General, to continue the mission of further improving ESPE activities and scientific meetings.

For the other (C.K.), the first experience of ESPE was at the pioneering 1st joint meeting with the Lawson Wilkins Pediatric Endocrine Society, organised by Pierre Sizonenko in Geneva in 1981, and I have presented data at virtually every meeting since then. I am proud to have served on Council, helped to guide the Society's strategic direction and to be involved with ensuring that our interaction with the pharmaceutical industry continues to reflect the highest ethical standards as these evolve over time. ESPE has always been at the forefront of developing such relationships, which are vital for our scientific and educational activities, in a transparent and appropriate manner.

I have always felt that such activities as the Winter School and, especially, the Clinical Fellowship Programme, which I have chaired for a number of years, go to the heart and soul of what an organisation like ESPE should be about. ESPE has provided educational opportunities for trainee paediatric endocrinologists, initially from Eastern Europe but now including all parts of Europe, Africa, South America, India and China, as ESPE itself has developed to become the premier paediatric endocrine society worldwide.

It is appropriate, I believe, that this 50th Meeting of the Society takes as its theme 'Evidence-Based Paediatric Endocrinology – Its Strengths and Limitations.' This significant milestone in the history of our Society gives us the opportunity to look back at what we know scientifically, to critically appraise the basis of that knowledge and to look to the future as ESPE becomes an increasingly international forum for the exchange of high quality basic scientific and clinical information. We are also continuing the long-standing tradition (as discussed by Sten Drop below) of having a memorable concert during the ESPE evening, given by the Chamber Orchestra of Europe.

For both of us, thinking back over so many Annual Scientific Meetings (and forward to more!), there are, of course, fond memories of particularly outstanding

lectures and symposia. We also remember the delight when an eminent senior colleague commented favourably on a poster presented at our first meetings. There has been the continuing pleasure of renewing old acquaintances and making new friends at the Annual Meetings and at other ESPE educational activities, including the Winter and Summer Schools, and elsewhere, discussing collaborative research or clinical matters.

Above all, as we in our turn have become more senior in the Society, we have valued these and other special opportunities to support and encourage our younger colleagues from all around the world, in whose hands the future of paediatric endocrinology, and of ESPE itself, appears to be secure.

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Preface

The plan to collect and describe ESPE memorabilia started to evolve in the summer of 1997 when I was sorting and packing the ESPE files into boxes for my successor as Secretary, Martin Savage. Already during my years as Secretary I had realised that the files in the boxes inherited from my predecessors were not as complete as I had expected and that they included almost nothing from ESPE's early days. Fortunately, I soon discovered that ESPE's first Secretary/Treasurer, Henk Visser, had kept his personal, tidy collection of meeting programmes and correspondence from 1962 to 1975 which he readily offered for my use. My own collection started in 1975, so I had continuity, at least in terms of meeting programme booklets. The original intention of presenting a review of ESPE's remarkable development at its 40th anniversary during the Joint meeting in Montreal was neither ideal in terms of the setting nor realistic in view of the workload involved. So we aimed at the 50th annual meeting in Glasgow, the city which had already hosted ESPE's 5th meeting back in 1966.

When looking at the dozens of huge removal boxes packed with paper files at the ESPE secretariat in Bristol, the megabytes of electronic files there and the large collection of historically interesting photos amassed so far, it soon became clear that this project would need professional help to succeed. I found this in Dr. Matthias Georgi, a young historian who, with his team, has specialised in compiling and editing histories on industrial and scientific topics, and I am grateful to ESPE Council for supporting him. Since all relevant paper files, including meeting programmes and photos, have now been scanned, Council and members in the future will have access to a new ESPE Electronic Archive in which every document can be easily searched for and retrieved. This will greatly facilitate Council and committee work, improving continuity since, e.g. previous discussions and decisions on specific topics will be readily available.

The intention of this book was not to describe the history of paediatric endocrinology in Europe – this would require 5–10 times the number of pages – but rather to provide a concise overview of the development of ESPE from a small club of friends to a global scientific society. It should also have a personal touch, so Council selected (in its usual, well-balanced fashion) 21 senior members who enthusiastically volunteered to briefly record their 'Personal Recollections' of ESPE. These are fun to read, and

also reflect the charming variety of approaches to this task within Europe. This book should also serve as a reference, compiling the most important facts of all previous ESPE Annual Meetings (a tedious task). This section seems all the more important as none of the many members I have asked have kept all their previous programme booklets, not even most of the former Presidents regarding 'their' ESPE meeting.

I would like to thank all those ESPE members and friends who readily and enthusiastically contributed photos, stories, files and data. Henk Visser, now in his eighties and with an impressive memory, was indispensable for covering the first 15 years; Leo Van den Brande and Ralph Rappaport provided valuable help with details of their terms as Treasurer and Secretary. All former ESPE Presidents whom I was able to approach promptly helped to fill in most missing details. This general cooperation and overall support from the membership demonstrated that the old ESPE spirit of friendship still lives on. I am very grateful to Matthias Georgi and his team for their expert support, in particular to Ina Deppe, Katharina Roth and Carola Wagner of 'historische-projekte.de', to Joanna Voerste, my former ESPE secretarial assistant for her excellent job of translating texts and polishing up my English drafts, and to Thomas Nold at S. Karger Publishers: without them this ESPE history project would not have become a reality.

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