“I would have everie man write what he knowes and no more.”—MONTAIGNE

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EDITORIALS

NINTH WORLD CONGRESS OF ANAESTHESIOLOGY

This issue of British Journal of Anaesthesia marks the occasion of the 9th World Congress of Anaesthesiology in Washington. The frequency of world congresses dictates that each national society of anaesthetists has the opportunity of organizing such an international meeting on only one occasion in a lifetime. This opportunity frequently acts as an incentive and we are confident therefore that, under the auspices of the American Society of Anesthesiologists, an outstanding meeting has been organized with great efficiency. As a result, it is anticipated that those who are fortunate enough to attend the Congress will enjoy an academic programme which provides intellectual nourishment of a high order and social activities which combine hedonism with culture.

The additional printing on our front cover is designed to commemorate the Congress, but does not signify any special selection of manuscripts for this issue. The contents have been determined by the emergence of papers through normal editorial processing. It will be immediately obvious that the number of manuscripts originating from outside the U.K. exceeds the number of British papers—we have authors from Canada and the United States, Western Europe, Scandinavia, the Republic of Ireland and Australia, and only seven manuscripts from the United Kingdom. This reflects the international nature of our Journal, which is reflected also in the fact that the number of subscribers resident outside Britain greatly exceeds that within the country. Thus, to some extent, the title “British” is misleading as it applies only to the location of the immediate editorial team and publishers.

British Journal of Anaesthesia is the oldest and largest independent journal of anaesthesia in the world. The majority of other large anaesthetic journals are connected with institutions, clubs or societies of anaesthesia, the functions of which are clearly and immediately discernible to their members. However, in recent years, British Journal of Anaesthesia has also developed activities in addition to those involved in the publication of scientific manuscripts. At the time of this World Congress, it seems appropriate to us for these wider aspects of the Journal’s affairs to be revealed before our readers and subscribers. We have therefore invited the Chairman of the Editorial Board to produce an accompanying editorial which, in the context of our 65th anniversary, discourses on these topics.

Graham Smith
Editor

SIXTY-FIVE AND GOING STRONG!

BRITISH JOURNAL OF ANAESTHESIA REACHES ANOTHER LANDMARK

This year British Journal of Anaesthesia is paying a visit to the United States, to the World Congress at Washington. The programme committee has agreed that we may hold a session entitled “Going into Print”, where issues relating to modern journal publication will be aired. Specific views will be presented by members of our Board, aided by discussion with editors from other leading anaesthetic journals on the correct approach to preparing and submitting manuscripts.

British Journal of Anaesthesia is, of course, no stranger to the United States. In addition to our valued contributors, readers and subscribers within the U.S., we are proud that our founder, in 1923, and first editor, H. M. Cohen, was an American. He qualified in New York and served with the U.S. Army as a doctor, but settled in Manchester where the Journal was published from 1923 to 1974. From the start, American interest and participation was intense with the names of Gwathmey, Donovan, Guedel and especially McKesson prominent. They exchanged
anaesthetic recipes, social news and also, occasionally, gossip. For example, the communications following the deaths of S. R. Wilson (Secretary to the Board) and Howard Jones, while respectful, make rivetting reading and would be considered bad taste by today's standards.

By the late 1920s, leading figures from British and American anaesthesia had exchanged visits and the Journal carried photographs of the parties on board ship. In 1927, the Board of British Journal of Anaesthesia received a splendid diploma from the International Anesthesia Research Society (IARS) in recognition of its services to the specialty. In all this, the hand of F. W. Mc-Meechin, the great international protagonist of anaesthesia and founder of the IARS (and also our senior contemporary Anesthesia and Analgesia) is evident. In addition to those of Cohen and Wilson, the names inscribed on the diploma include Boyle, Buxton, Blomfield and Fairlie. Recently, the Board has located a copy of the diploma and will be taking it to Washington in the belief that it may have some currency if we find the right quarter!

It is normal policy to allow our ship to sail without making an exhibition of the engine room. However, in response to the Editor's request in the preceding editorial, some aspects of our Board's work are presented here and they are unique in anaesthesia.

The Editorial Board of the Journal has a defined size and elects itself according to a precise constitution, having regard to the need to recruit the best academic talent in the U.K. and, increasingly, an appropriate range of specialist advice. From time to time, the Board has considered the case for establishing an international board. So far, this idea has been set aside because of the potentially high cost of arranging meetings. In practice however, the Board receives help and advice from distinguished anaesthetists in many countries, so that there is an informal group of "friends" of the Journal. Service on the Board is entirely voluntary.

The Board elects the editors, usually from its own ranks. In the past 65 years there have been only seven editors, two (E. Falkner Hill and T. C. Gray) in partnership for part of their period of office. Now Graham Smith succeeds William Fitch in the role.

The Board corporately owns the Journal and acts through three trustees, whose actions are governed by U.K. laws on trusteeship. Thus there is no question of any individual owning an asset. For more than 60 years, the Journal was produced for the Board by publishers who acted in a normal commercial role, bearing any financial risks and providing the Board with sufficient funds for editorial purposes.

In the early 1980s, the standing of the Journal was sufficiently secure to enable the Board to accept responsibility for its financial fortunes. Through our present contract with PSP (the publishing division of the British Medical Association) each component of the publication process is undertaken for an appropriate fee, but the Board retains any profit (or bears any loss). Thus we have total control of costs and any surplus generated may be applied, after professional advice, to charitable activities in anaesthesia. The Journal is registered as a charity under U.K. law and is thus exempt from taxation. The principal charitable activity is, or course, production of the Journal.

Within the past 3 years, we have organized annual writing workshops for doctors in training, the entire cost being borne by the Board provided the registrant submits in advance a manuscript suitable for dissection. We have provided the Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland with funds to cover the total cost of furnishing the "British Journal of Anaesthesia" library at its new headquarters in 9 Bedford Square, London. We were pleased to donate to the lecture fund established in memory of our late colleague Gordon McDowall. Furthermore, we have established a research fellowship and the first advertisement for this post attracted strong competition. Recently we invited applications for a number of short-term travelling fellowships to enable young anaesthetists from other countries to visit selected training centres in the U.K.

It is not our intention to generate large profits, since our primary purpose is the dissemination of knowledge through the Journal. However, we are proud that the current stewardship of our prized heritage is being turned more effectively to the wider academic purposes of the specialty of anaesthesia.

What are the special challenges facing us now? The Board and its Editors are acutely aware of the need to balance the essential role of the Journal as a vehicle for good quality reports of laboratory and clinical research with the provision of high grade review material for the general reader. We regard with disappointment the emergence of
populist material from poorly identified sources which is intended to offer light reading for professionals. This usually lacks the talent to achieve quality and instead resorts to a dangerous pseudo-science, amounting at times to misleading information. Sadly, the revolution in printing techniques will result in such risks to our professional standards remaining with us for the foreseeable future.

We are conscious also of the implications of technological change for our own Journal. The Board is concerned that in recent times the interval between receipt of manuscripts and publication has become unacceptably long. A priority now is to ensure, after careful revision of our editorial and publishing processes, that these delays are at an end. British Journal of Anaesthesia was the first journal in the specialty to appear monthly, in 1955, and did so to expedite publication. The introduction of new technology can, and has already started to, achieve the same end.

In our special anniversary year we send greetings to friends and subscribers throughout the world. To our friends in the United States we wish, in addition, success in the forthcoming 9th World Congress.

Alastair A. Spence
Chairman of the Editorial Board