

EJCTS 20 YEARS OLD

THE EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF CARDIO-THORACIC SURGERY: HOW IT ALL BEGAN ... 20 YEARS AGO

H. G. Borst, August 2007

Twenty years have passed since publication of the first edition of our Journal. The early thoughts about publishing the European advances in cardio-thoracic surgery precede this event by several years. The background: Cardiac surgery had emanated from vascular surgery in the francophone countries, while it had grown from thoracic surgery in the English speaking world. Accordingly, several national journals of varying denomination had appeared after World War II: thoracic, cardio-thoracic and cardio-vascular. The only publication covering all of Europe was that of the International Society of Cardio-Vascular Surgery, the "Green Journal", covering, among others, its annual European congresses. Over the years, however, much discontent about quality and vascular focus of this journal arose among the younger generation, carrying the flag in our field.

The first attempt at producing a modern European publication centred on cardiac and thoracic surgery originated in the German speaking countries. In 1978, the editor of "Thoraxchirurgie", Karl Vosschulte of Giessen University, asked the undersigned to convert this journal, published by Thieme Verlag, into English. Its new name: "The Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgeon" (TCVS). Curiously, resistance to this denomination initially came from the American Association for Thoracic Surgery (AATS), which seemingly feared a confusion of the journals' names and, supposedly, unwanted competition.

As it turned out, the TCVS created a moderate boom of all-European cardiac and thoracic publications, the editorial board now encompassing outstanding representatives of our field on the Continent. What this journal was missing, however, was the backup of a powerful scientific society.

This was to change in late 1986. In the course of founding the European Association for Cardiothoracic Surgery Francis Fontan, Bordeaux, asked me to become editor of a new journal, the "European Journal of Cardio-Thoracic Surgery" (EJCTS). I gladly agreed, all the more since Springer Verlag with its vast international connections had offered a take over from Thieme. Due to lack of funding of the new Society, Springer was to own the journal, a disadvantage, which has concerned the EACTS for several years.

Thus, work began at Hannover Medical School with a powerful staff of local and international co-workers. Among them, our previous first co-editor, Roland Hetzer, and our long-term secretary, Rose-Marie Bösche, were of prime importance for getting this project off the ground.

New items introduced were the strict selection of manuscripts by quality, using a superb board of referees. For the first time in Europe, national origin of submissions was disregarded in principle. All congress presentations, including the discussions, were published word-by-word. Needless to say, one of the major problems to be handled in any new publication of this sort in Europe related to lack of scientific English and of discipline of authors and speakers - no wonder in our conglomerate of languages and attitudes! All these and many other obstacles ultimately were overcome and the EJCTS soon attained considerable international attention on both sides of the Atlantic.

The time for changing the journal's editorship had come in 1992. With Marko Turina now responsible, the Journal reached an even higher level of attention, all the more, since he selected Elsevier as the new, remarkably progressive publisher. Subsequently, Ludwig von Segesser took over the editorship, at the same time greatly expanding the scope of the Journal. In summary, we can note with great satisfaction and pride that our Journal has become one of the three leading publications in our field world-wide!