Diabetologia 1965–1985 – Portrait of a journal

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This special Jubilee Issue of *Diabetologia* has been published to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the journal as the official organ of the *European Association for the Study of Diabetes (EASD)*. The Association itself, which passed its 20th birthday just a few months ago, is only slightly older than its journal [1]. In fact, founding a European journal for “clinical and experimental diabetes and metabolism” was one of the main aims of the *EASD* when a number of highly respected diabetologists got together to create the Association in the early sixties. Since its first issue, published on 1 August 1965, *Diabetologia* has become (one of) the leading scientific journal(s) in the field of diabetology. It has gained an international reputation as a forum for clinical, basic and epidemiological research related to diabetes mellitus. As an introduction to this Jubilee Issue of *Diabetologia*, I would like to sketch a little portrait of the journal and its development over the past 20 years.

The founding and development of *Diabetologia*

As in most other aspects of history, more important than dates and figures are the personalities who form the development of an institution. There is no doubt that the former Editors have played the crucial role in establishing the present status of *Diabetologia* (Fig. 1). Thus, it seems most appropriate to thank Professor Karl Oberdisse (Düsseldorf) and his Deputy Editor Professor Karl Jahnke (Düsseldorf) for having delivered, nursed and educated the journal for the first 8 years of its life. From 1973 to 1976, W. Creutzfeldt (Göttingen) and K. Schöffling (Frankfurt) edited the journal. The editorial duties were then assumed by KGMM Alberti in Southampton, who moved, together with *Diabetologia*, to Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1978. In 1980, Andrew Cudworth became the Editor-in-Chief; most tragically, Andrew became very ill soon after and died in 1982 [2]. After a difficult time during which Drs. Alberti, Nattrass and Tattersall, together with the excellent help of Ms. Sarah Spencer-Smith as Editorial Assistant, were responsible for the journal, the editorial office went back *ad fontes* to Düsseldorf. The Düsseldorf team consists of three Assistant Editors, Drs. G. E. Sonnenberg,

F. W. Kemmer, and A. A. R. Starke; a Consultant in Statistics, Dr. H. J. Trampisch; an Editorial Assistant, Ms. Marie Kroll (who recently assumed the duties of Sarah Spencer-Smith, London and Beverly Niemann, Düsseldorf); and Ms. Christine Tripp and Anna Marie Troups-Neumann, who provide part-time support. This team has been ably managing the increasing workload of the editorial process, together with the Editor-in-Chief.

Over these 20 years, *Diabetologia* has grown in stature, status, volume and price (Fig. 2). Sophisticated statistical manoeuvres, including multivariate analyses of the data displayed in Figure 2, have indicated linear, direct and highly significant associations between each of the various parameters shown; unfortunately, these efforts have not been helpful in hypothesizing about the potential causal nature of the various relationships. This area must therefore be left to speculations of all kinds.

The history of the journal reflects in large part the well-known problems of other multinational endeavours and cooperative efforts between scientific and more commercially oriented parties. During the very early phase of planning the journal as an official organ of the *EASD*, difficulties due to various national and linguistic interests and ambitions had to be overcome. (In fact, during the first years of the journal's existence it spoke with three different tongues: the manuscripts were published either in English, French or German, according to the preference of the submitting authors. Abstracts were provided for each article in all three languages until 1973.)

Due to the initiative of a group of German diabetologists headed by K. Oberdisse, a Founding Committee for the journal was convened during the 5th Congress of the International Diabetes Federation in Toronto in 1964. The leading members of this committee were Sir F. G. Young (Cambridge); J. P. Hoet (Louvain); K. Lundbaek (Aarhus); A. E. Renold (Geneva); and K. Oberdisse (Düsseldorf), who was asked to become the journal's first Editor. Furthermore, the committee decided to name the new journal *Diabetologia* and – after long discussions – to ask *Springer-Verlag*, Berlin-Heidelberg-New York, to become its publisher. Based upon a simple exchange of letters, *Springer* became the proprietor of the trade name *Diabetologia* and agreed to

Fig. 1. Editors-in-Chief of *Diabetologia* 1965–1982. Left to right: Karl Oberdisse (Düsseldorf) 1965–1972; Werner Creutzfeldt (Göttingen) Co-Editor 1973–1976; Karl Schöffling (Frankfurt) Co-Editor 1973–1976; Kurt G.M.M. Alberti (Southampton – Newcastle-upon-Tyne) 1977–1980; Andrew G. Cudworth † (London) 1981–1982

publish the journal with the help of some initial support from various pharmaceutical companies and a rather substantial financial contribution by the *EASD* – a burden which remained with the Association until a formal agreement between the *EASD* and *Springer* was reached in 1983.

Finally, the Editorial Board was formed with K. Oberdisse as Editor-in-Chief, A. Loubatières (Montpellier), K. Lundbaek (Aarhus), A. E. Renold (Geneva) and J. Stowers (Aberdeen) as Associate Editors; K. Jahnke (Düsseldorf) as Managing Editor; and an Advisory Board consisting of the following colleagues: E. Azeard (Paris), W. J. H. Butterfield (London), J. L. R. Candela (Madrid), V. Conard (Brussels), G. R. Constam (Zürich), M. Coppo (Modena), W. Creutzfeldt (Göttingen), E. R. Froesch (Zürich), W. Gepts (Brussels), D. Ik-

kos (Athens), R. Luft (Stockholm), J. Mirouze (Montpellier), G. Mohnike (Karlsburg), R. F. Ogilvie (Edinburgh), P. J. Randle (Bristol), S. Signorelli (Catania), Z. Skrabalo (Zagreb), J. Sybilla (Prague), O. Walaas (Oslo) and O. Wieland (Munich).

Throughout the history of the journal, the fine balance between various European nationalities and different areas of diabetes and metabolism research represented by the members of the first Editorial Board of *Diabetologia* was maintained.

As the journal grew, so did the Editorial Board. It now consists of the Editor-in-Chief, nine Assistant Editors, one to two Deputy Editors, a Consultant in Statistics and an Editorial Assistant. The position of Managing Editor was abandoned in 1972. The current Editorial Board, in addition to the Editor-in-Chief, includes

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Fig. 2. Development of *Diabetologia* between 1965 and 1984. The price delineates the official purchase cost in West German Marks (postage not included) while a substantial reduction of the subscription expenses is offered to the members of the European Association for the Study of Diabetes. The Citation Impact Factor represents a ratio between the number of citations in the international literature referring to articles published in *Diabetologia* and the volume of the journal during the two years prior to the citation survey (Science Citation Index and Journal Citation Reports published by the Institute for Scientific Information, 325 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106, USA)

R. B. Tattersall (Nottingham) as Deputy-Editor-in-Chief; G. Bolli (Perugia), K. D. Buchanan (Belfast), R. M. Denton (Bristol), H. J. Hahn (Karlsburg), P. A. Halban (Boston), P. D. Home (Newcastle-upon-Tyne), U. Keller (Basel), L. Kennedy (Belfast), H. Kolb (Düsseldorf), Y. Le Marchand-Brustel (Nice), H. Orskov (Aarhus), and J. D. Ward (Sheffield) as Associate Editors; H. J. Trampisch as Consultant in Statistics; H. J. Bodansky (Leeds), B. M. Dean (London), P. L. Drury (London), A. N. Gorsuch (London), F. W. Kemmer (Düsseldorf), G. E. Sonnenberg (Düsseldorf), A. A. R. Starke (Düsseldorf) and D. B. J. Thomas (London) as Assistant Editors; K. G. M. M. Alberti (Newcastle-upon-Tyne), J. P. Assal (Geneva), S. Baba (Kobe), H. Bibergeil (Karlsburg), P. Brunetti (Perugia), E. Cerasi (Jerusalem), W. Creutzfeldt (Göttingen), M. I. Drury (Dublin), D. Hepp (Munich), P. Lefèbvre (Liège),

Table 1. Breakdown of publications in *Diabetologia* 1965–1984 (expressed in percent of total volume per year)

Year	Original articles	Short/Rapid communications	Review/Editorials	Abstracts	Letters-to-the-Editor
1965	75	5	4	16	1
1966	66	6	5	23	—
1967	94	2	1	1	1
1968	76	7	3	13	1
1969	76	9	1	11	1
1970	74	1	2	22	—
1971	87	3	3	7	—
1972	79	6	4	10	—
1973	87	4	1	8	—
1974	88	2	4	6	—
1975	84	3	2	11	—
1976	87	—	3	10	—
1977	84	—	5	12	—
1978	79	1	10	9	—
1979	77	1	22	—	1
1980	75	1	10	9	3
1981	72	1	13	11	2
1982	71	5	9	11	3
1983	79	3	7	8	3
1984	78	4	7	10	2

I. Mincu (Bucharest), G. M. Molinatti (Turin), H. H. Parving (Copenhagen), A. H. Rubenstein (Chicago), D. Schade (Albuquerque), and R. Unger (Dallas) as members of the Advisory Board and Ms. Marie Kroll as Editorial Assistant.

No detailed regulations beyond the general structure of the Editorial Board have ever been formulated. The Editorial Board members are appointed by the Council of the *EASD* for periods of 4 years. Once yearly, the Editorial Board of *Diabetologia* meets under the chairmanship of the Editor-in-Chief during the annual meeting of the *EASD* to discuss basic policies as well as details of editorial business. The Editor-in-Chief is appointed for one or two 4-year terms by the Council of the *EASD*; he is an ex officio member of the Executive Council of the *EASD* and reports to the Council twice yearly.

Beginning with its first volume, *Diabetologia* has been primarily devoted to the publication of original manuscripts (Table 1). Reviews, editorials and Letters to the Editor have been restricted to approximately 10% of the journal's volume. Although the space devoted to publication of abstracts has been as high as 20%, in 1982 the Editorial Board of *Diabetologia* decided to discontinue the printing of abstracts, with the exception of those accepted for the annual meeting of the *EASD*.

During the 20 years of its existence, *Diabetologia* has tried hard to maintain a balance between basic and clinical research. Although clinical investigators keep accusing the Editors of publishing too many biochemistry articles, and our biochemical colleagues always lament about the over-representation of clinical research publications, it seems as if the journal has been able to avoid

Table 2. Breakdown of original articles published in *Diabetologia* 1965–1984 (expressed as % of total volume of original articles per year)

Year	Clinical investigation ¹	Basic research ²	Epidemiology	Animal experimentation ³
1965	48	19	6	24
1966	32	32	7	29
1967	16	15	8	58
1968	36	32	4	25
1969	36	20	6	37
1970	33	6	2	54
1971	45	13	9	32
1972	38	15	2	42
1973	36	17	1	45
1974	25	27	–	45
1975	40	26	6	30
1976	36	19	3	42
1977	44	24	5	24
1978	38	21	6	35
1979	35	24	7	33
1980	36	23	8	31
1981	36	15	7	41
1982	41	16	13	28
1983	36	20	15	27
1984	36	30	16	18

1 = clinical research, human investigations; 2 = biochemistry, clinical chemistry, molecular biology, morphology etc; 3 = studies involving intact animals, studies based upon perfusion of intact animal organs or organ systems

Table 3. Contributions to original manuscripts published in *Diabetologia* 1965–1984 (expressed as number of manuscripts published)

<i>(A) Countries of origin:</i>	
United Kingdom of Great Britain	340
USA	330
Denmark	191
West Germany	169
Sweden	112
France	100
Switzerland	84
Belgium	78
Japan	55
Australia	50
<i>(B) Cities of origin:</i>	
London	132
Göttingen	77
Aarhus	64
Geneva	50
Copenhagen	49
Brussels	47
Paris	45
<i>(C) Individuals:</i>	
G. C. Gerritzen	29
W. J. Malaisse	27
A. E. Renold	24
W. Dulin	22
K. G. M. M. Alberti	21
L. C. Heding	21
W. Creutzfeldt	20

Table 4. Editorial audit *Diabetologia* 1965–1984

	1965	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	
Number of original papers submitted		155					80	100	125	157	145	159	199	220	292	344	411	402	408	488	425
Acceptance rate %		67					80	75	51	57	57	49	48	50	50	50	38	47	43	32	32
Mean number of coauthors per original article	2.1	2.0	2.0	2.2	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.3	2.0	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.7	2.5	2.7	2.8	2.5	3.0	3.3	3.6	
Mean length of original articles, pages	7	6	8	6	6	7	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	
Percent of original articles of bi- or multicenter origin	0	21	23	11	8	23	17	17	16	23	19	24	30	27	34	34	29	27	37	38	

leaning to either side (Table 2). There has been a clear decrease in articles based on animal experimentation over the past several years.

In Tables 3–4 and Figure 3, a number of more or less interesting figures about national, geographic and individual contributions to original publications in *Diabetologia* during the past 20 years are presented. The relative preponderance of Great Britain, USA and Denmark as contributing countries, the fall of the acceptance rate to approximately 30%, and increase in the number of coauthors and multicenter articles of decreasing length in more recent years might be of note. As an appendix, it should be added that there was no statistically significant increase of original publications contributed by the various Editors-in-Chief during their respective tenures as Chairmen of the Editorial Boards.

The editorial process

The basis of the editorial process is the peer review system. A most intensive peer review system was initiated when the journal was founded, and has been enlarged despite the rapid increase of the incoming submissions. To date, 95% of all original articles submitted to *Diabetologia* are reviewed by three independent experts or by two reviewers and one Associate Editor who is chosen by the Editor-in-Chief because of his or her particular expertise in the field of the submitted article. Although much can be said against the efficiency of the peer review system for selecting manuscripts appropriate for publication [3–7], no realistic alternative has ever emerged from endless discussions on this subject in recent years.

In any case, the effort and the support provided by the international community of scientists active in various areas of diabetology to the editorial process of *Diabetologia* is extremely impressive, especially when one considers that essentially all of the sometimes very time-consuming review work is being done by our experts in their spare time. Since 1965, approximately 7500 reviews, written by experts from more than 35 countries around the world, have been obtained by the editors of *Diabetologia*. Table 4 gives an account of the number of original papers submitted, each of which is subject to peer review. Based on personal acquaintance and experience, every editor tries to assure himself or herself of the support of a group of expert reviewers upon whose judgement he or she can rely – although the selection of reviewers is hardly ever based on such formal processes as published recently [9]. As the reviewing process becomes more competitive and, possibly, the outcome of the editorial decision increasingly important for submitting authors with regard to the success of future grant applications, the responsibility of the reviewers becomes quite formidable.

In fact, the overall quality, the usefulness, the standards and the relevance of (diabetes) research is based more and more upon the effectiveness of the peer review system; i.e., its quality, honesty and scientific standards. This should therefore be the place to thank the reviewers of *Diabetologia* for their enormous efforts in maintaining the quality and the necessary speed of our editorial process (Fig. 4).

On receipt of the three reviews (or the Associate Editor's Report along with two reviews), every article is discussed during the editorial conferences held twice weekly between the Editor-in-Chief and the other members of the Düsseldorf team. If a positive decision is reached or if the authors are encouraged to attempt a revision of their paper according to the reviewers' suggestions, a copy of the manuscript is marked up by the Editorial Assistant. The marked-up copy outlines linguistic and editorial inadequacies such as deviations from the Instructions to Authors [8], to which almost no submitting author ever seems to pay much attention. On the return of version 2 of the manuscript (which is requested within 3 months), the paper is evaluated by an Assistant Editor and discussed again during the editorial conference; quite often one or two of the original referees are asked to look at the manuscript in its revised version once more. At this stage, or sometimes even earlier, the Consultant in Statistics assumes the difficult task of commenting on the validity of the biometric methods used in the paper [10]. If version 2 (or 3 to 5) is finally accepted, the manuscript is further evaluated by one of our UK-based Assistant Editors and/or Editorial Assistant for style and presentation before it is finally sent to the printers. Since English is not the mother tongue for the majority of our submitting authors, quite intensive efforts to improve the style of the manuscripts are often necessary.

Fig. 3. *Diabetologia* 1965–1984. Number of original publications originating from Europe —, North America ----, or elsewhere - - -

Fig. 4. *Diabetologia* 1965–1984. Publication time, i.e. time between date of submission and date of publication of original articles

Despite the rather complex editorial process which is often made even more tedious by postal problems and tardiness on behalf of our authors, it must remain an editorial goal to maintain the publication time or to reduce it even further.

In addition to the publication of original articles, *Diabetologia* has always printed reviews and editorials which are usually written on request by the editor as suggested by members of the Editorial Board. Finally, Letters to the Editor are published which have a direct bearing on articles published recently in *Diabetologia*. Quite recently, we introduced the section 'Rapid Communications'. These papers are not formally reviewed and, if accepted, are printed within 2–3 months of submission.

In the future, *Diabetologia* expects to confront problems akin to the leading international journals in other areas of science. These problems have been discussed repeatedly in editorials in both our journal and others [8, 11]. Double publication, repeat publication, fraud-in-science, dilution of reviewer pools etc. will remain the issues to be solved. Furthermore, the problem of the growing workload for Editors-in-Chief will become increasingly difficult; nevertheless, the division of the editorial responsibility as performed by other journals in the past does not seem to be a good solution. On the other hand, the creation of new journals (four international diabetes journals have been founded during the past 2 years) does not seem to be a problem at all – since first rate manuscripts will always go first to the established leading journals.

The Editorial Board has thought quite intensively about how the 20th anniversary of *Diabetologia* could be adequately commemorated. To this end, we felt it would be useful to present an overview of present diabetes research by asking the first Minkowski Awardees to present what they felt were their most important contributions during the time since they wrote their Minkowski Award articles; in addition, we asked a number of investigators active in various fields of clinical diabetology to present us with reviews of their particular fields of interest. I do hope that this idea and its outcome meet with the approval of our readership.

Michael Berger

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