Introduction to the British Cardiovascular Society centenary special issue

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One hundred years may be a short time in the history of medicine but not in the development of specialist cardiac care. This year, we celebrate the centenary of the British Cardiovascular Society, the world’s first professional cardiac society, formed as the Cardiac Club in 1922. As such, it was the pioneer of the many national and international cardiac societies that now form such an important part of our professional lives, as well as the advances in cardiovascular research and healthcare across the globe.

This centenary edition provides a historical perspective of the British Cardiovascular Society, its influence in the evolution of cardiac care both in the UK and beyond. It also provides insight into how it has evolved from an exclusive club to a diverse community of cardiovascular healthcare professionals, faced the challenges of modern cardiology, and developed close national and international associations with other professional societies along the way.

It is no coincidence that this centenary celebration is published in Heart. The original Heart was first published in 1909 by Sir Thomas Lewis and Sir James Mackenzie (figure 1), both founding members of the Cardiac Club. In 1939, the then Cardiac Society of Great Britain and Ireland launched its own journal, the British Heart Journal. In 1996, the journal was renamed Heart thereby returning to its original roots. This also reflected its growing international reputation, further enhanced in 2013, by the appointment of its current Editor-in-Chief, Professor Catherine Otto, the first female and non-UK editor in the history of the Society’s journal.

The review articles in this centenary edition are not intended to provide a comprehensive assessment of all aspects of cardiovascular care but rather to highlight and explore some of the key areas where the British Cardiovascular Society has significant influence in their evolution. They will also look from the present to the future, and the authorship of many of the articles reflects this by pairing established figures of British Cardiology with the emerging leaders, many of whom will be instrumental in continuing the evolution of the British Cardiovascular Society for the next 100 years.

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Figure 1 Cover of the first edition of Heart, 1909