Jubilee Editorial

A 50 year perspective: the British Heart Journal

A title lost, but a reputation won

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With this issue the *British Heart Journal* reaches its fiftieth year. The title belies the international flavour. Those who founded the journal would have liked to use the title *Heart*, which is to the point, like *Thorax* and *Gut*, other members of the stable of specialist journals published jointly by the *British Medical Journal* and other societies. This makes it especially piquant that the fiftieth anniversary of the *British Heart Journal* coincides with what would have been the 80th anniversary of *Heart*, which was founded by Thomas Lewis in July 1909. On 1 July 1909, the first issue of *Heart* appeared. It was edited and owned by Thomas Lewis, who produced it with the strong encouragement and help of James Mackenzie. A glance through the early volumes of *Heart* shows how well it served its purpose in the years when knowledge of arrhythmias was enhanced by the development of electrocardiography. Until the American Heart Association established the *American Heart Journal* in 1926, *Heart* was the only important cardiac journal published in English. After the American Heart Association parted company with its publishers it established *Circulation*—another one word title. Credit for the first cardiac journal, still in continuous publication, however, belongs to the French, who established the *Archives des Maladies du Coeur* in 1908.

HOW WE LOST HEART

Before the Cardiac Club was established in 1922,¹ *Heart* had a major role in the development of cardiology in Great Britain, and it also published contributions from many parts of the world. Lewis did not transfer editorial control or indeed ownership of *Heart* to the Cardiac Club, which was essentially an informal body; his ownership and very personal direction of *Heart* were always clear.²

Lewis had an idiosyncratic approach to the publication of his journal, which some may feel to have been a reasonable one: after the first issue, it appeared at irregular intervals, whenever he thought he had sufficient good material.³ As his interests moved away from cardiology, and focused on vascular responses in the skin and factors responsible for the appreciation of pain, so did his journal, and in 1933 he changed its title to *Clinical Science*. After Lewis established the Medical Research Society in 1938, he transferred ownership of *Clinical Science* to the Society the following year, but he remained editor of the journal until 1944, completing a term of 25 years.

THE BRITISH CARDIAC SOCIETY

As the need for a more formal organisation of cardiologists became apparent to the members of the Cardiac Club, their first objective once they had established the British Heart Society, was to launch their own journal. During the planning sessions, various titles were considered, including *Heart*. Lewis reluctantly agreed with this choice, but the name had to be abandoned because the publishers of *Clinical Science* proved unwilling to transfer the title.⁴ So the journal was called the *British Heart Journal* and its history has been closely interwoven with that of the British Cardiac Society throughout the years. Indeed, to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the *British Cardiac Society* in 1987, the *British Heart Journal* reprinted Cowan's note on the Cardiac Club¹ as well as notes by the joint editors, Maurice Campbell and Evan Bedford, together with a series of review editorials on topics that had interested cardiologists during these 50 years.

British Heart Journal

D Evan Bedford, editor 1939-1947

Maurice Campbell, editor 1939-1958

K Shirley Smith, editor 1959-1972

Walter Somerville, editor 1973-1980

PAST AND PRESENT

Since Campbell and Bedford the journal has had only three editors: Shirley Smith, Somerville, and myself. Despite the parochial title the flavour has always been international, and topics have reflected current interests in cardiology. Electrocardiography was discussed extensively at the beginning and congenital heart disease and the consequences of rheumatic fever and the successes of their surgical treatment were conspicuously featured later. Advances in special areas, for example nuclear magnetic resonance imaging, free radicals, gene probes, and atrial natriuretic peptide continue to get close attention, but the clinical flavour has been retained. Peer review is essential to the judgement of submissions, and every effort is made to combine clarity of expression of language with rigorous statistical analysis.⁵

As the *British Heart Journal* enters its 51st year, the editors remember their dependence on readers and contributors and on those who review submissions as well as others who keep a critical eye on

progress. As the pace of knowledge quickens, the journal aims to remain at the forefront, but not at the cost of losing touch with the sound principles established by those who conceived the *British Heart Journal*.

References

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- 3 Hollman A. Thomas Lewis—the early years. *Br Heart J* 1981;46:233-44.
- 4 Campbell M. The British Cardiac Society and the Cardiac Club: 1922-1961. *Br Heart J* 1962;24:673-95.
- 5 Evans SJW, Mills P, Dawson J. The end of the p value? *Br Heart J* 1988;60:177-80.

Editor

DENNIS M KRIKLER has been editor of the *British Heart Journal* since 1981 having previously been an assistant and associate editor. He is senior lecturer in cardiovascular diseases at the Royal Postgraduate Medical School and consultant cardiologist to Hammersmith Hospital, London. His personal links with American cardiology date back to postgraduate training as a visiting fellow to Boston in 1956 and he has been a fellow of the American College of Cardiology since 1971. His special interests include arrhythmias, electrocardiography, and the history of cardiology. In 1984 he gave the international lecture to the American Heart Association and received the Paul Dudley White citation for international achievement in cardiology.

Assistant Editors

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