

Guido G. Persijn

The founding of ESOT

The historian's first report

Received: 15 September 1999

Accepted: 20 January 2000

G. G. Persijn (✉)
Eurotransplant Foundation, P. O. Box 2304,
2301 Leiden, The Netherlands
Tel.: +31-715 79-5795
Fax: +31-715 79-0057

The Historian's First Report

At the farewell party of the 8th ESOT congress in Budapest, the motion arose that ESOT, having in the meantime grown to a sizeable adult, should have a historian. Being old enough to have witnessed the beginnings of the society and still young enough to be able remember it, the lot fell on me. The proposal was forwarded to the president and the council who apparently liked the idea, and so I was appointed. I am honored and flattered by the task, all the more so as I am interested in history and medicine, particularly in transplantation medicine.

In a general sense, it is the task of the historian to foster his society's culture from the start, for as long as it exists. As Sir Winston Churchill said in 1944 at the Royal College of Physicians in London, "The longer you can look back, the longer you can look ahead". More specifically, the tasks of the historian are, from my point of view, to ensure that the relevant documents of the society and the records of its achievements are collected, registered, stored, and, if necessary, put to use; furthermore to cultivate an awareness for the developments and trends in the attitudes connected with organ- and tissue donation and transplantation.

To help me carry out this duty, I received a stack of documents about 3 m high, collected in large files and books by our secretary, Claus Hammer. He was only too happy to pass this enormous pile on to me and get a little more room for himself again. Arnt Jacobsen,

too passed on a big bundle of papers, for which I am very grateful. All material on the society is of great value, and I would like to ask everyone, especially senior members of the society, not to throw away any old correspondence, memos, or other relevant papers related to ESOT, but to pass them on to me. I can always discard anything that proves useless.

Of the documents that have thus come into my hands, the oldest dates back to April 11th 1982. It is by Dr. George Uhlschmid of the Universitätsspital Zürich, and it is well worth quoting:

"Following the enthusiastic response from those participating in the Gelin-Memorial Symposium in Gothenburg in November 1981, it was felt that there was a need for a new society to be formed which would represent more accurately the aims and needs of transplantation surgery and surgeons in Europe. A number of European transplant surgeons met and formed a steering committee for the foundation of a society, the proposed name of which would be The European Society of Transplant Surgeons. The steering committee consisted of the following persons: Dr. Hans Brynger (Sweden), Dr. Walter Land (Germany), Dr. Raimund Margreiter (Austria), Dr. Maurice Slapak (United Kingdom), and Dr. George Uhlschmid (Switzerland). It was decided by the committee to invite a limited number of European transplant surgeons from those countries most actively participating in transplantation to form a Foundation Assembly. The assembly would then officially found

the society and elect the first general committee, which would consist of a President, Vice-President, Secretary-General, a Treasurer, and a Committee. The General Committee, in turn, would then finalize the preliminary draft of the bye-laws which have been suggested. (End of quote).

The founding assembly meeting was to take place on April 28th 1982 at 3 p. m. at the Hotel Zürich, in Zürich, Switzerland. Apparently there was some discussion as to the identity of the society and whether non-surgeons should be admitted. According to handwritten notes taken at this meeting, Prof. Roy Calne wished to include all “persons actively involved in organ transplantation”, whereas Dr. Slepak would have preferred to have “only surgeons”. The compromise was delivered by the late Prof. Pichlmayr who proposed admitting both groups. In the course of that memorable meeting the assembly also proposed changing the society’s name from ESTS to ESOT.

The participants of the founding assembly were: Prof. Dr. Juhani Ahonen (Helsinki), Prof. Dr. Guy Alexandre (Brussels), Prof. Dr. Hans Brynger (Gothenburg), Prof. Dr. Roy Calne (Cambridge), Prof. Dr. Max Dubernard (Lyon), Prof. Dr. Carl-Gustav Groth (Huddinge), Dr. Arnt Jakobsen (Oslo), Prof. Dr. Gauke Kootstra (Maastricht), Prof. Dr. Walter Land (Munich), Prof. Dr. Felix Largiader (Zürich), Prof. Dr. Rudolf Pichlmayr (Hannover), Dr. Raimund Margreiter (Innsbruck), Prof. Dr. Maurice Slapak (Portsmouth), and Dr. George Uhlschmid (Zürich).

From these founding fathers (no female surgeons were present!) the first council was elected as follows:

President:	Prof. Dr. Roy Calne
Vice-President:	Prof. Dr. Maurice Slepak
Secretary:	Dr. George Uhlschmid
Treasurer:	Prof. Dr. Walter Land
Councillors:	Prof. Dr. Hans Brynger, Prof. Dr. Max Dubernard, Dr. Raimund Margreiter

The founding assembly then installed the following main committees: 1. Membership Committee, 2. Program Committee, 3. Publications Committee, 4. Committee of National Representatives.

The assembly decided that the society should meet bi-annually, the year of the meeting preceding the year of the Congress of the Transplantation Society. The first meeting, so the unanimous agreement, was to take place in Zürich in September 1983 (later moved to November 1983) under the local chairmanship of Prof. Largiader and Dr. Uhlschmid.

This done, the founding convention was closed with a celebrative dinner. For those interested, I can supply a copy of the menu and the list of wines served at this memorable event.

Dr. Guido G. Persijn, historian, ESOT