The Birth of Nephron, the Original Journal of Nephrology

Correspondence housed in the current archives of the International Society of Nephrology reveal that the first stirrings of an idea to create a medical journal dedicated to the kidney and its diseases occurred in November 1961 when the Executive Committee of the International Society of Nephrology (ISN) approved the idea of creating an international journal of nephrology, which was to be called 'Nephrologia'. Prof Gabriel Richet, the Secretary General of the First International Congress of Nephrology in Geneva and Evian was to be its Editor-in-Chief and Karger Editors, of Basel and New York, in conjunction with Editions Masson et Cie of Paris, were to be the publishers. The plan was for twelve monthly issues which were to constitute two volumes per year and were to contain original articles in English with summaries in English, French, Spanish and German. No one could accuse the founders of being partisan!

Despite the ambitious plan, little seems to have materialised until 1963, when it was decided to limit the number of issues to 6 per year and alternative names for the journal were considered, including 'Kidney' and 'Le Rein' since the original title was deemed to be 'too complicated'. Four types of contributions were contemplated (i) original papers, notes and brief communications, (ii) technical descriptions of medical devices, (iii) summaries of the work of the national societies affiliated to the International Society of Nephrology and (iv) analyses of original articles relevant to the kidney, to be written by the original authors themselves. There would be, in addition, occasional editorials or review articles. The President of the ISN, Prof Jean Hamburger indicated that the journal would now be entitled 'Kidney' but would be published in English and French.

By 1964, another (and final) name change was decided upon. 'Nephron' it was to be, and the journal was to be under the ownership of the ISN and the publishing house, Karger. As the General Secretary of the ISN pointed out in a letter to Prof Claus Brun in Copenhagen in January 1964, 'it is difficult to be the owner of something without a penny' which was why shared ownership was necessary but the first intimations of strong scientific independence of the nascent journal were raised by his statement that 'to share ownership of the name does not mean that we do not control the scientific management of the journal'.

In 1964 the first volume of 'Nephron: Journal of the International Society of Nephrology' appeared (fig. 1) with Gabriel Richet in Paris and George Schreiner in Washington, D.C. acting as Editors-in-Chief. The Editorial Committee was constituted by S.E. Bradley, J. Brod, J. Hamburger, B. Josephson, J.P. Merrill and H.E. de Wardener. The goals and aspirations of the journal were the same as those articulated in 1963. Claus Brun, the President of the ISN expressed the hope that the new journal would grow 'to be a two-way bridge between the basic sciences and medicine on which a steady stream of information can travel'. The venture was a success and by mid-1969 the circulation had increased from 716 (vol. 1) to 1843 (vol. 5) with two special issues appearing, one being 'On the control of urine formation' guest-edited by J.C. De Haven and N.Z. Schapiro and the second being an issue in honour of Robert F. Pitts, guest-edited by Donald W. Seldin.

Much water has flowed under the bridge since those heady days. In 1971 the ISN decided to create a new journal, with a new name, under its sole ownership, but *Nephron* continued to thrive in an independent spirit

Nephron

Journal of the International Society of Nephrology
Journal de la Société Internationale de Néphrologie

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1964

Vol. 1

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Fig. 1. Title page of the first issue of *Nephron*.

under the editorship of G.M. Berlyne and S. Giovannetti (1972–1998) and G.M. Berlyne and S. Ito (1998–2002).

Nephron has lined the shelves of nephrologists, academic and clinical, for nearly 40 years. It is our hope that the new format of *Nephron* initiated with this issue, incorporating three separate journals under one cover, each dedicated to a specialised area of nephrology, will continue to provide high quality, original research and scholarly writings which will continue to stimulate and inform an international readership in the spirit of the founding editors.

Leon G. Fine

Editor-in-Chief, Nephron Journals

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The information contained in this paper was drawn from 12 letters and documents in the archives of the International Society of Nephrology in Amsterdam which can be accessed at www.isn-online.org. The author is grateful for access to this information.