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Nova et vetera



Professor Alastair Compston

In 1999 the *Journal of Neurology* embarks on its 108th year of continuous publication, though the name has changed a few times. It was founded in 1891 by Wilhelm Heinrich Erb, as '*Deutsche Zeitschrift für Nervenheilkunde*'. Among Erb's many other achievements was the discovery of tendon jerks in 1875, an honor he had to share with Westphal; yet it was Erb who clearly perceived the reflex nature of this new phenomenon. Among those who followed Erb as editor were Ludwig Lichtheim and Adolf Strümpell. In 1931 the publishing company of F. C. W. Vogel was bought by Springer. The Journal's imprint changed accordingly in 1942. Yet the greatest change was the period of internationalization from 1970–1974, under the leadership of Marco Mumenthaler. First the name was changed to '*Zeitschrift für Neurologie – Journal of Neurology*'. Then in 1994 the language switched from German to English, and the main title became '*Journal of Neurology*'. Since that time there have been two Joint Chief Editors. In 1991 the Journal became the official medium of the European Neurological Society (founded in 1986), while the links with the '*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Neurologie*' were continued.

Professor Alastair Compston (Figure) served as Joint Chief Editor for the last 10 years, a remarkably long time by present standards. He was able to combine this task fruitfully with the chairmanship of the university department of neurology in Cambridge and also with the leadership of a flourishing research group, on basic and clinical aspects of multiple sclerosis. During the first half of his term he shared the responsibility for the scientific contents of the Journal with professor

Klaus Poeck from Aachen. It is not only the duration but also the quality of professor Compston's work as an editor that stands out. He helped forge the partnership with the European Neurological Society; he brought the Journal, with its long-standing continental tradition, in closer contact with British authors and reviewers; and during his tenure the number of annual issues increased from 8 to 12, the Journal Impact Factor from 0.9 to 1.9. On a personal note, I have greatly appreciated our collaboration for the last 5 years. We regularly communicated about matters of editorial policy, not only at meetings with the publisher and the members of the Editorial Board, but also through many informal contacts. We also exchanged copies of the 'Circulation sheets' that contained the history of each manuscript; Alastair's reports habitually contained amusing and good-natured innuendos that helped to lighten the lonely hours at the editorial desk. The readers and publishers of the Journal are greatly indebted to him.

The Journal is very fortunate in that the Executive Committee of the European Neurological Society has found Professor David Miller willing to accept the Joint Chief Editorship, from January 1999 onward. Coincidentally, Professor Miller's main research interest is also multiple sclerosis, with some emphasis on imaging. Nevertheless, his expertise in neurology extends to many other fields, as attested by his track record as a reviewer. He is based at The National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery, Queen Square, London, where memories of giants like Hughlings Jackson and Gowers still linger.

The advent of a new Joint Chief Editor is not the only change at the Journal. From this year onward the

number of readers of the *Journal of Neurology* will substantially increase, through a combined rate for attending the annual ENS meeting and subscribing to the Journal. Also we plan to expand the number of pages devoted to current affairs, in addition to scientific reviews, original communication and letters. This new section might contain personal news,

scientific news culled from other journals. ENS announcements, and a historical section. The growing stature and circulation of the *Journal of Neurology* proves there is not only a place but even a need for at least one neurological journal based on the European continent. A relatively minor change, finally, is that the Journal will henceforth be published

under the joint imprint of Springer Verlag and its daughter company Steinkopff. Dr. Thomas Thiekötter will remain our inspiring commercial director at the publishing company. Professor Miller and I, together with the publisher, are committed to serve our readers and authors by providing scientific and professional information of high quality.