



Message from the President

First of all I would like to refer the reader to the Editor, Phillip Harris' message and secondly to my New Year's greetings to our readers in the January 1996 issue of our journal.

The International Medical Society of Paraplegia (IMSOP) was founded in 1961 at Stoke Mandeville Hospital. Its first President was Sir Ludwig Guttmann who was one of the first pioneers to advocate comprehensive treatment and rehabilitation of people with a spinal cord injury (SCI) as soon as possible after the injury occurred. Other pioneers, mainly during the Second World War, either in Europe or in the United States of America, had also tried to introduce a comprehensive and the earliest possible approach to the care of the victims of such a devastating injury. Our Society was founded during the Stoke Mandeville International Games where many doctors, from different countries, gathered and exchanged their experiences and expertise. It needed the drive of Sir Ludwig Guttmann to establish and increase its membership which now has over 1200 members in 82 countries. The creation of the Swiss Interdevelopment Fund, thanks to the Swiss Paraplegia Foundation, has enabled the diffusion of our journal to many developing countries which are so badly in need of information and reciprocal exchange of experience. I do hope that this message will interest and stimulate doctors in many of these countries to contact us and also to help others by becoming members of IMSOP.

In May 1963 our journal PARAPLEGIA was published. In this first issue Sir Ludwig Guttmann in his foreword defined the aims of this journal:

"It is to provide an international forum for an easy exchange of ideas for all those responsible for the welfare of our paralysed fellow-men, as well as to promote further elucidation of the many and varied aspects of this problem, that this new journal PARAPLEGIA is dedicated. Long may it flourish!"

Our knowledge of the physiology and pathology of the spinal cord has increased tremendously, especially in the last decade. There is an increase of patients with non-traumatic spinal paralysis due to a wide variety of neurological disease with disastrous consequences not only for themselves but also for their families and for the society in which they live. There is an increase of people with paralysis from traumatic SCI in the developing countries, mainly due to traffic accidents and violence. The latter also concerns the so called developed countries.

As a result of consultation with many of our members (and non-members) within the different multidisciplinary fields of interest in IMSOP the change of name of our journal from PARAPLEGIA to SPINAL CORD was proposed to the IMSOP Council and to the General Assembly in New Delhi, India in November 1995 and the decision was adopted by a very large majority.

As a founder member of IMSOP I will always have a certain nostalgic feeling about the change of name. Nevertheless, I always had the impression that the word 'paraplegia' did not encompass many very important aspects and aims of our Society besides the rehabilitation of so many people afflicted by traumatic and non-traumatic lesions of the spinal cord throughout the world.

Why have we chosen the month of April 1996 to change the name? It coincides with the date of the first message of Sir Ludwig Guttmann in 1963. We agreed, Phillip Harris the Editor, Stockton Press the Publishers and myself that the facsimile of the front cover of the first issue of Paraplegia would be printed inside this issue of SPINAL CORD and is reproduced facing this article. This new title also denotes clearly that it is the *Official Journal of the Medical Society of Paraplegia*.

'Qui n'avance pas recule'. This is a French proverb which can be translated to: *'The one who does not go forward gets left behind'*. This is very similar to Benjamin Disraeli's quotation mentioned by Phillip Harris in his message.

Paul Dollfus
President of IMSOP