

EDITORIAL

## The European Society of Anaesthesiologists and the EJA: strength in unity

On 15 April 1991, a meeting took place between Professor Michael Vickers and Dr John Zorab (representing the European Academy of Anaesthesiology; EAA), and Professor Magna Andreen and myself (representing the then embryonic European Society of Anaesthesiologists; ESA). The purpose of the meeting was to explore ways in which the two organizations could co-operate to achieve the common aims of providing education for all European anaesthesiologists, a forum for research presentation and an improvement in standards through examinations and better training programmes. The minutes of that meeting record:

'All present agreed that the ideal solution would be for the EAA and ESA to be partners, running complementary services under the auspices of a governing body, which could, for example, be called the European Federation of Anaesthesiologists, or the European Foundation of Anaesthesiology (EFA).'

It was envisaged that the EFA would co-ordinate the activities of the two organizations. The ESA would organize a large open meeting to provide continuing education and a forum for research presentation, while the EAA would hold smaller meetings, primarily for academic anaesthesiologists, and would expand its activities in the areas of examinations and training programme inspections. The two organizations would, it was envisaged, share scientific and some other committees, and the *European Journal of Anaesthesiology*.

Sadly, this concept was not adopted at the time, for reasons which are now of historical interest only. Over subsequent years, there was public friction between the EAA and the ESA, and a degree of tension between the then European Regional Section of the World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists (now the Confederation of European National Societies of Anaesthesiologists; CENSA) which organized the 4-yearly European Congress of Anaesthe-

siology. However, throughout these years, beyond the public gaze, there were regular meetings between representatives of the three organizations to explore mechanisms of collaboration, and to avoid obvious conflicts of dates or venues for congresses.

The new partnership between the ESA, EAA and CENSA has its foundation in these regular meetings, and the trust and understanding that grew between the representatives of the three bodies. The European Federation of Anaesthesiologists was conceived in late 1998, and established formally in January 2000 (the 1991 proposal formed the basis of the new EFA, so perhaps the term 'cloned' is more appropriate than 'conceived'!).

Because congresses are planned several years in advance, it has been impossible to prevent duplication in the year 2001. However, from the year 2002, the EAA and ESA meetings will be combined, and in the year 2003, when a European Congress was planned by CENSA, there will be a single scientific meeting, organized by the ESA but run jointly with the EAA, CENSA and the Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland. This will be the first meeting in which all members of the EFA will participate together, and will be a milestone in the evolution of anaesthesiology in Europe. We hope that, in due course, subspecialist societies will consider collaborating with the EFA rather than hosting a spiralling number of specialized scientific meetings.

Fortunately, it has been possible to demonstrate the new collaboration between the European anaesthesiology organizations much more rapidly through the *European Journal of Anaesthesiology* (EJA), which has become the official Journal of all of the major international bodies. From January 2000, the ESA started to distribute the EJA to all its members, and in April, the abstracts of free papers at the ESA Annual Meeting were, for the first time, published as a Supplement of the EJA. The involvement of the

ESA has greatly increased the circulation of the EJA, and the ESA is fully committed to strengthening the Journal. ESA members are encouraged to submit manuscripts to the EJA, and we have added members to the editorial team. We anticipate that the impact factor of the Journal will increase as a result of the improved circulation, but a significant increase will occur only if there is also an improvement in the number of high quality research manuscripts submitted. All of the organizations that have adopted the EJA as their official Journal must actively encourage their members or constituents to submit a higher proportion of their scientific manuscripts to the EJA.

I believe that the collaboration, which has started with involvement with the EJA and the harmonization of educational activities over the next 3 years, will continue to evolve. The ESA and EAA are discussing the possibility of a single subscription for anaesthesiologists who see the advantages of being a member of both organizations. Through CENSA, there will

be increased collaboration between national societies, the ESA and the EAA. This unity must strengthen the political force of Anaesthesiology in Europe as a whole, and within each European country. There are increasing financial constraints within health services, universities and the pharmaceutical and technology industries. These constraints threaten our working conditions, training, education, choice of drugs and replacement of equipment, and have impaired research and development in Anaesthesiology and its allied specialities of pain management, intensive care and emergency medicine. It is essential that anaesthesiologists act together to ensure that sufficient resources are made available to allow us to provide the highest standards of care and safety for our patients.

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