

**GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE
INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF
GYNAECOLOGY AND OBSTETRICS 1954/1974**

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Foundation of F.I.G.O.

Several international congresses of Obstetrics and Gynaecology were held in the beginning of the 20th century, before World War II interrupted international scientific activities. The last of these congresses took place in Amsterdam, in 1938, and was already overshadowed by the impending world tragedy.

In 1950, prominent gynaecologists of many countries convened in New York, in a large congress, organized in co-operation with Drs. Adair and Taylor, who, later on, contributed actively to the development of the International Federation. During this successful convention, the delegates decided, in a special meeting, that an International Society should be created, with the aim of organizing world congresses at regular intervals.

A Committee was appointed to prepare the foundation of the new International Society and Drs. Adair (Chicago), Garin-Lajoie (Montreal), Taylor (New York), and Van Tongeren (Amsterdam) actively co-operated in it. Switzerland was designated as host for the first World Congress, to be held in 1954.

The Swiss Society of Gynaecology and Obstetrics decided that the Congress would convene in Geneva and elected Dr. de Watteville, President, and Dr. Geisendorf, Secretary General.

The six above mentioned gynaecologists discussed and agreed on the basic features

of the new organization. It was decided that it should be a Federation grouping national Societies or Federations and not individual members. In co-operation with a Swiss legal adviser, the Committee prepared a Constitution.

Immediately before the opening of the Scientific Congress, the foundation meeting of the International Federation of Gynaecology and Obstetrics was convened in Geneva, and after discussion and amendments, the Constitution was accepted by the delegates of the national Societies of 42 countries, which, thus, became foundation members of the International Federation, thereafter called F.I.G.O. (Fédération Internationale de Gynécologie et d'Obstétrique).

The objectives of the International Federation are:

(a) to promote the development of science and assist in scientific research work relating to all the fields pertaining to gynaecology and obstetrics, to further the attainment, by all appropriate means, of a higher level of physical and mental health of women, mothers and their children, to develop and improve the exchange of information and ideas in the field of gynaecology and obstetrics, to co-operate in research for new knowledge in this field, to contribute to the improvement of teaching standards in the profession, to promote international co-operation and facilitate relationships between national medical bodies of the profession;

(b) to recommend a common policy in

**Secretary General.*

regard to these matters on the proposal of Member Societies;

(c) to represent Member Societies whenever joint scientific action can be pursued in such matters;

(d) to foster the initiation and development of all activities aiming at the attainment of the objects of the Federation as defined under (a) above;

(e) to organize international congresses including all countries or certain groups of countries. Circumstances permitting each international congress shall be held successively on a different continent. Members of National Societies may attend all congresses.

Dr. de Watteville became the first President of the new Federation. An Executive Board of 15 members was elected and after the foundation of the International Federation, this body has regularly met once a year in various countries to assess the activities of F.I.G.O. and plan future programme.

The constituency of F.I.G.O. having considerably increased, it was felt that more Societies should have the chance of being represented on the Executive Board. A modification of the Constitution was therefore accepted by the VIth General Assembly, in New York, in 1970. At present, the Executive Board is composed of 8 permanent members (representatives of the 8 Societies with the largest number of individual members) and 9 rotating members acting on the Board during 9 years. One third of the rotating members is replaced every 3 years. Each General Assembly nominates the following Officers for a period of 3 years: President, President-elect, Vice-President, Treasurer, and Secretary General (with a consultative status. The Treasurer and the Secretary General may be re-elected and, usually, the President-elect

becomes President after 3 years of office.

Though all these years, the Officers of F.I.G.O. and its Executive Board members worked on a strictly voluntary basis without any compensation whatsoever, even for travel expenses.

Among all the distinguished colleagues who devoted much of their time to the success of the Federation, we think with particular gratitude of those who have unfortunately passed away, especially:

L. Gérin-Lajoie, President of the IInd World Congress and second President of F.I.G.O.;

R. Keller, first Vice-President and substitute for L. Gérin-Lajoie as President of F.I.G.O. (1958-1961);

E. Cova, second Vice-President (1954-1958);

P. A. Belochapko, Representative of U.S.S.R. on the Executive Board;

V. B. Green-Armytage, Representative of Great Britain at the Foundation Meeting of F.I.G.O.;

S. Mitra, Representative of India on the Executive Board;

J. T. Louw, Representative of South Africa on the Executive Board, and Chairman of the special Committee on Qualifications;

H. Yagi, Treasurer (1958-1961), second Vice-President (1964-1967), Representative of Japan on the Executive Board, and Chairman of the special Committee on Medical Terms;

H. Martius, Representative of Germany on the Executive Board, and Member of the Cancer Committee of F. I. G. O.;

W. C. W. Nixon, Chairman of the special committee on the Training and Practice of Midwives and Maternity Nurses;

W. Bickenbach, Representative of Germany on the Executive Board, and

Member of the Cancer and Perinatal Mortality Committees.

Membership

It is obvious that F. I. G. O. has fostered international co-operation by establishing contacts between the affiliated Societies. Furthermore, it has in several countries instigated the foundation of National Societies of gynaecology and obstetrics, or the grouping of already existing Societies in one national Federation (for example: Argentina, Brazil, France).

A very moderate membership fee was fixed. The resulting limited budget of the Federation somewhat hampered the development of its activities. But, in the long run, this attitude proved to be rewarding since to date, the national Societies or Federations of 76 countries have become members, representing the vast majority of existing Societies of gynaecologists and obstetricians throughout the world.

The Societies or Federations of the following countries are affiliated with F. I. G. O.:

Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Canada, Ceylon, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Ecuador, Finland, France, German Democratic Republic, German Federal Republic, Ghana, Great Britain, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Korea, Lebanon, Luxemburg, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Rumania, Salvador (El), Singapore, South Africa,

Spain, Sudan, Sweeden, Switzerland, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Uruguay, U.S.A., U.S.S.R., Venezuela, Vietnam, Yugoslavia.

The countries underlined are FOUNDATION MEMBERS.

World congresses

One of the main objectives of the International Federation has been reached, namely, to organize at regular intervals world congresses of gynaecology and obstetrics, and to hold on these occasions a General Assembly of F. I. G. O. delegates.

The IInd World Congress was held in Montreal, Canada, in 1958, under the chairmanship of L. Gérin-Lajorie, who became the second President of F. I. G. O.

The General Assembly accepted the Bye-Laws and decided to reduce the interval between world congresses from 4 to 3 years. Thus, the IIIrd World Congress, organized and presided over by T. Antoine, took place in Vienna, Austria, in 1961, and H. C. Taylor, Jr. New York, became the third President of F. I. G. O.

The IVth World Congress was held in Buenos Aires/Mar del Plata, Argentina, in 1964. G. di Paola was its President. The General Assembly nominated G. Tesauro, Naples, fourth President of F. I. G. O.

The Vth World Congress took place in Sydney, Australia, in 1967, under the chairmanship of S. D. Meares, and A. Alvarez-Bravo, Mexico, became the fifth President of F. I. G. O.

The VIth World Congress was held in New York, U.S.A., in 1970, under the chairmanship of H. C. Taylor, Jr., and Sir John Peel, London, was nominated sixth President of F. I. G. O.

The VIIth World Congress took place

in Moscow, U.S.S.R., in 1973, under the chairmanship of L. S. Persianinov, and B. N. Purandare became the seventh President of F. I. G. O.

The VIIth General Assembly decided to hold the VIIIth World Congress in Mexico, in 1976, under the chairmanship of L. Castelazo-Ayala, and R. Caldeyro-Barcia, Montevideo, present President-elect, will become the eighth President of F. I. G. O.

Japan will be the host country for the IXth World Congress of F. I. G. O., to take place in 1979.

Experience gained at the past world congresses stressed the necessity and the importance of a well balanced scientific programme requiring the restrictive selection of competent speakers on a world-wide scale, who would report on a few carefully chosen subjects.

Since only an international group could adequately tackle such a difficult task, the General Assemblies appointed special Committees for the scientific programmes of the world congresses, starting with the Buenos Aires Congress, in 1964. The Committee preparing the scientific programme for the 1976 Congress in Mexico, is chaired by O. Käser, Basel.

It became a tradition to include reports on the basic, scientific, as well as the clinical aspects of the problems under discussion into the programme, and to invite several outstanding personalities to deliver a lecture on a subject of general interest.

The scientific programme Committees felt that the local organizing Committees should make every effort for facilitating direct contacts and discussions among the numerous congress participants, for example, at fireside conferences and/or luncheon discussions.

In order to stress the importance of the scientific exhibits, F.I.G.O. has, at some congresses, awarded diplomas for the best presentation, and accepted with appreciation the generous offer of Sandoz Ltd. to publish a special volume dealing with this part of the scientific programme.

The organization of the forthcoming world congresses is discussed at each General Assembly in the light of past experiences, and it is hoped that in this way, steady progress will be made towards a satisfactory scheme for world congresses.

Special committees

It has been possible for the Federation to gain influence and to realize practical achievements by entrusting special committees with particular tasks. For example, a glossary of medical terms in gynaecology and obstetrics, in eight languages, has been published under the patronage of F. I. G. O. and the direction of N. C. Louros, Athens, (Elsevier Publishing Company, 1964).

The special *Committee on Training and Practice of Midwives and Maternity Nurses*, chaired by the late W. C. W. Nixon, London, has published in co-operation with the International Confederation of Midwives and the World Health Organization a report "Maternity Care in the World". This volume provides a wealth of information concerning the practice of obstetrics throughout the world. The second edition of this volume is under preparation. Sir John Peel has taken over the chairmanship of this Committee, which became the "Joint Study Group on the Training and Practice of Midwives and Maternity Nurses", and which is organizing working parties for the training of midwives in developing countries. Sir John resigned in 1973, and

J. S. Tomkinson, London, has been appointed new Chairman of the Committee.

Through its *Cancer Committee*, headed by H. L. Kottmeier, Stockholm, F.I.G. O. is taking an active part in the preparation of the "Annual Reports on the Results of Treatment in Carcinoma of the Uterus, Vagina, and Ovary". A considerable effort has been made towards the establishment and general use of schemes for clinical grading of gynaecological cancers (cervix, corpus uteri, vagina, ovary). H. L. Kottmeier resigned in 1973, and H. Ulfelder, Boston, was appointed new Chairman of the Committee. However, H. L. Kottmeier remains the Editor of the Annual Reports. P. Kolstad, Oslo, has been nominated co-Editor.

Much time has been devoted by the *Committee on Qualifications*, chaired by J. N. de Villiers, Belville/South Africa, to gather complete information on the curriculum of gynaecology in the various countries. This material is serving for classification of the diplomas according to their respective value.

Recommendations for minimum standards have been laid down and the Committee has been asked to study a model for examinations applicable in countries where such examinations are not yet introduced. Throughout its work, the Committee maintained the basic principle of gynaecology and obstetrics being one inseparable speciality. J. N. de Villiers who resigned in 1970, was replaced by P. O. Hubinont, Brussels. Upon suggestion of the new Chairman, several meetings were organized for discussion of the teaching of obstetrics and gynaecology, on the occasion of regional congresses. In addition, the VIIth General Assembly, in Moscow, in 1973, accepted to hold similar meetings on the occasion

of F. I. G. O. world congresses. The next meeting of Professors of obstetrics and gynaecology will take place in Mexico, in 1976.

The *Committee on Annual Reports and Definition of Terms in Human Reproduction*, chaired by C. P. Hodgkinson, Detroit, devoted much time to the preparation of a list of ancillary terms relating to pregnancy, birth, puerperium, and neonatology, which was discussed and accepted by the VIIth General Assembly, in Moscow, in 1973. Furthermore, the Committee has been asked by the World Health Organization to submit suggestions for the revision of Chapter XI of the International Classification of Diseases.

The *Committee on Maternal Mortality Studies*, chaired by A. Alvarez-Bravo, Mexico, prepared a form for confidential reporting of individual maternal deaths, which was accepted by the VIIth General Assembly, in Moscow, in 1973. Furthermore, the Committee is preparing a pamphlet containing the results of a survey on maternal mortality.

The *Committee on Perinatal Mortality*, chaired by G. Tesauo, Naples, is collecting detailed information concerning perinatal mortality in large obstetrical departments. This inquiry should yield information on facilities leading to reducing perinatal mortality, as for instance: the availability of a reanimation center, the presence of neonatologists in the department and possibly in the delivery room, the usefulness of special designs for fetal monitoring, etc. The Committee intends to publish a report on perinatal mortality statistics, inspired by the Annual Report on the Results of Treatment in Carcinoma of the Uterus, Vagina, and Ovary.

The *Committee on Medical Aspects of Human Reproduction*, chaired by H. C.

Taylor, Jr. New York, will publish in the near future a Manual for the assistance of teachers in medical aspects of reproduction. The work should provide background for the teacher and basic material from which lectures could be easily composed. The teacher's Manual is dealing with Reproductive Physiology, Elementary Demography and Health Statistics, Family Planning Techniques and Programming.

A newly born Committee of F.I.G.O. is the *Committee for the Study of Gynaecological Problems in Childhood and Adolescence*, chaired by R. Contamin, Grenoble. The Committee is organizing meetings attended by gynaecologists and pediatricians, and devoted to problems connected with infant and adolescent gynaecology, such as congenital malformations, endocrine disturbances, benign and malignant tumors occurring in children and adolescents. Special attention is also paid to inflammatory diseases, and to the problems of oral contraception in young patients.

The limited budget of F.I.G.O., fed by the modest membership contributions, is, obviously, insufficient to finance all activities. It is the merit of several of the chairmen of special committees who have been able to raise the funds necessary for their work.

Finally, a *Committee on the Reorganization and future Functions of F.I.G.O.* was appointed, with F. G. Geldenhuis, Pretoria, as Chairman. The terms of reference of this Committee are: "To examine the present and future functions and objectives of F.I.G.O. and the possible need for modification in the future; to advise on the administrative and financial arrangements as well as the means of communication within the Federation best suited to the achievement of

these objects". This Committee was set up because the Executive Board felt that it would be timely to enquire, after 20 years, into the future of the Secretariat and to see what F.I.G.O. is trying to achieve and whether it is succeeding in its aims. The Committee was asked to report whether it considered any pruning of activities necessary or whether additional tasks should be undertaken.

The Committee prepared a report containing suggestions for the reorganization and future functions of F.I.G.O., which was sent to the constituency of F.I.G.O. with the request for comments. Final decisions on the recommendations to be submitted to the VIIIth General Assembly, in Mexico, in 1976, will be taken at the next Executive Board meeting, after reception of comments and/or suggestions from the affiliated Societies.

Contacts established with other international medical organizations

Links have been established with the International Fertility Association, International Academy of Cytology, International Confederation of Midwives, International Union Against Cancer, International Pediatric Association, International Society for the Study of Trophoblastic Disease, International Society for the Study of Vulvar Disease, International Reference Centre for Abortion Research, as these organizations also deal with problems of concern to gynaecologists and obstetricians. Common action has been taken in several instances and it is hoped that even closer co-operation will be reached in future.

The International Federation has been recognized by the World Health Organization as a non-governmental organization in official relations with this body. In this capacity, F.I.G.O. is invited to send re-

representatives to the meetings of W.H.O.'s Expert Committees dealing with problems related to our speciality, as for instance, cancer campaigns, the treatment of cancer, the use of cytology for cancer detection, the midwife in maternity care, basic and clinical aspects of intrauterine devices, the ovulatory cycle, etc.

F.I.G.O. being invited to send observers to the General Assemblies and Executive Board meetings of W.H.O., has, in turn, been pleased to have representatives of the World Health Organization attend its world congresses.

Journal of F.I.G.O.: International Journal of Gynaecology and Obstetrics

Upon the initiative of G. Tesauro, the International Federation began publishing its own Journal in 1963. G. Tesauro was appointed Editor-in-chief. Starting with a minimal contribution provided by F.I.G.O., the Journal has become a self-supporting enterprise thanks to the skill and the tireless dedication of its Editor-in-chief and his co-workers, and despite the low subscription fee. The number of collective and individual subscribers has steadily increased, showing the interest of the gynaecological world in our Journal. One of the purposes of the Journal is the diffusion of information concerning F.I.G.O. and the constituent Societies. However, we hope that the further development of the Journal will permit us, in future, to increase the part devoted to scientific information.

A section of the Journal is to be reserved for publishing outstanding papers dealing with new diagnostic and therapeutic procedures or biological investigations, submitted by authors from throughout the world.

From 1963 to 1967, the Journal was printed in Naples, Italy. From 1968, it

was printed in Baltimore, U.S.A., and H. A. Kaminetzky became the new Editor-in-chief. However, after discussion of the situation of the Journal in Moscow, in 1973, the VIIIth General Assembly authorized H. A. Kaminetzky to sign a contract with Almqvist and Wiksell, Stockholm, Sweden, which will be the new publisher from 1975.

Library of F.I.G.O.

At the Secretariat in Geneva, a Central Library has been established which receives more than one hundred periodicals dealing with our specialty. Over two thousand volumes have been donated by generous colleagues and we hope that their example will be widely followed in future.

International Association for Maternal and Neonatal Health

The VIIIth General Assembly, in Moscow, in 1973, approved the suggestion of A. Alvarez-Bravo, former President of F.I.G.O., to create an International Association for Maternal and Neonatal Health. Such an Association, independent of F.I.G.O. but closely co-operating with it, could collect funds and grant financial support for projects susceptible to save, throughout the world, the lives of expectant mothers and their babies and improve their future health.

The objectives of the Association are:

- (a) to promote and finance basic and applied research in human reproduction;
- (b) to improve the standards of practice of medical and paramedical care in the field of obstetrics-gynaecology;
- (c) to foster and finance investigations and programmes on social problems related with maternal and perinatal health;
- (d) to disseminate scientific knowledge

concerned with the women, the mothers, the fetus, and the newborn;

(e) to publish and distribute the results of the above mentioned research and programmes, and to promote the welfare of women, mothers and their infants;

(f) to propose and suggest to the directing bodies of national, foreign or international institutions of higher education, the conclusions of courses or programmes aimed at a better knowledge of maternal and perinatal health;

(g) to purchase those movables and immovables allowed by Law;

(h) in general, to exercise any other rights which may be necessary or convenient in order to carry out the aims of the Association.

Any person may become member of the Association. The aims, endeavours, and projects of the International Association are described in detail in an informative pamphlet, which is available upon request at the F.I.G.O. Secretariat, Maternité, 1211 Geneva 4, Switzerland.

The foundation meeting of the International Association for Maternal and

Neonatal Health will take place early in 1975.

Conclusions

Twenty years have passed since the foundation of the International Federation of Gynaecology and Obstetrics, which has overcome the initial difficulties and is now solidly established. Even though it is a non-governmental organization with slender means, its influence is increasing. However, we are aware of the fact that solely the active co-operation between the Executive Board and all the affiliated Societies will permit to reach the aims of F.I.G.O. Such a co-operation would become much easier and fruitful if all individual members of the constituent Societies were regularly kept informed by their Officers of all main activities of F.I.G.O. Thus, their interest and good will could be roused and our action for a better care of the woman, the mother, and the baby to be born would then be supported by an impressive number of gynaecologists throughout the world.