

The history of the Swedish Society of Neuroradiology

The possible formations for a society of neuroradiology was discussed on March 13, 1971 at a meeting of the Swedish Society of Radiology under the chairmanship of Professor George Fredrik Saltzman. An interimistic board was formed including Erik Lindgren, Torgny Greitz, Ingmar Wickbom (chairman), Bengt Lilieqvist (secretary).

Two month later (23.5.1971) the board had a meeting to discuss the policy of the proposed society. It was agreed that first of all it should be a scientific society but also that it should take an active part in teaching of neuroradiology and in the training of neuroradiologist. Finally it should also consider legal matters related to the work and position of physicians working in the field of neuroradiology.

It was further stressed that formation of a Nordic society with members from Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Iceland was also needed.

Finally it was decided that a society should be formally founded after some specifically selected physicians working n neuroradiology had been approached.(i.e. doctors mainly working in neuroradiology).

On the 26 of November 1971 the Swedish Society of Neuroradiology was formally founded in Stockholm and a board was elected with Erik Lindgren as president, Torgny Greitz as vice president, Bengt Lilieqvist as secretary, Sten Cronqvist and Clas Rådberg as members at large.

The membership fee was put at SEK10, equal to about 1.50 dollar.

Already at this meeting the necessity was discussed to work for neuroradiology as a speciality in its own right .

The first scientific meeting was held 25 of May 1972 in Stockholm. Three papers dealing with encephalography and ventriculography were presented. The second meeting was held in Lund 11 May 1973. The secretary reported that the Society had been accepted as a section of the Swedish Society of Radiology. This was considered as the first important step to recognized as a speciality.

The board had also been in contact with the ministry of education already in March 1971 concerning the formation of a specific chair in neuroradiology at the Karolinska Institute - with the wanted result! The first professor of Neuroradiology was installed in 1973.

The possibility of a closer cooperation with the Swedish Societies of Neuroradiology and Neurosurgery was discussed. This later resulted in a joint symposium in November 1973. This cooperation was to continue for years to come.

The scientific meeting in Lund in 1973 dealt with isotopes and reports on CBF were included. At the following meeting in 1974 the scientific part - not unexpectedly - dealt with CT.

In this contex a few words about the introduction of CT in Sweden - a story about foresight and unusual collaboration between normally competing university departments. Hounsfield and Ambrose reported at a British meeting in May 1972 on CT. The news - as you know - spread very fast indeed. (Already in June 1972 an article appeared in a magazine dealing with electronics entitled "x-ray examination of the brain simpler than a visit to the hairdresser") Initiated by Torgny Greitz a group of radiologists representing all Swedish universities had been formed. Together they applied for grants for a CT equipment to be bought and located at the department of neuroradiology at the Karolinska Hospital. The money was secured and with that a unique project of collaboration between all the university departments of radiology started. This was around October 1973. Half a year later our combined efforts were published as a supplement of Acta Radiologica. Personally I am proud that such a form of collaboration could take place - and work! I guess one prerequisite was that we all knew each other and that we all had the same basic ideas all emanating from Serafimerlasarettet - Erik Lindgren.

Over the following years the Society continued the work to have neuroradiology recognized as a speciality. The next step was to bring the Swedish Health authorities to accept certain rules as to who should be qualified to perform neuroradiology. Eventually this was put on paper and thus some kind of standard was set.

Further steps included neuroradiology courses arranged by the Society, courses arranged by neuroradiologist in the different universities. Some of these courses were directed to radiologists wanting to become specialists in radiology. Other aimed at neuroradiologist as a "continuing education".

All our work gave result and ultimately our goal was reached - neuroradiology became a speciality the 1st January 1991.

One may say that the Nordic Society of Neuroradiology - formed in Bergen, Norway, 1972 - is very loosely organized. The meeting is held once yearly, in the beginning separately, during the last years in connection with the yearly arranged meetings of the Nordic radiological societies. The place varies from year to year between the Nordic countries. The reasons why we have changed from separate to joint meetings are several. First, it simply became too many meetings, secondly, there were complaints that we - the neuroradiologist - isolated ourselves from the rest of radiologists. These complaints were not unfounded. We had as mentioned sought and got an extremely good cooperation with the neurosurgeons, neuroradiologist, neurochemist and neurophysiologist, and maybe neglected the radiologists. Indeed this was reversed to what it used to be where we had a feeling that the general radiologists tended to forget us. The pendulum swings!

For each Nordic meeting there is a president who happens to be the local neuroradiologist responsible for the scientific program and the collaboration with the board of Nordic Society of Radiology. Actually there are only two persons who are continuously working for the Nordic Society - the secretary who is also treasurer and the auditor. Very simple, very easy to work with - and functioning!

Some general comments partly based upon an series of booklets published by Nycomed with contributions by Lindgren, Greitz, Fredzell, Bergström and others.

True neuroradiology is, according to Lindgren, radiology using methods to demonstrate the nervous system. Thus according to him neuroradiology started when air was first used as contrast agent.

Greitz stresses that it is not Swedish neuroradiologist who are responsible for the fundamental breakthroughs in neuroradiology. However, they have often been first to make methods clinically useful and to make them complete.

Erik Lindgren does not consider Schiller as the father of neuroradiology. This is in opposition to the view taken by Fischgold and Bull (1976). In the same way Erik Lindgren is of the opinion that the first true symposium was held 1949 in Rotterdam. The reason being that in Antwerp 1939 only 2 reports out of 25 dealt with true neuroradiology - one by Lysholm dealing with ventriculography, the other about angiography by Dyes.

At the following symposium in Stockholm 1952, officially the third - according to Lindgren the second - American colleagues took part for the first time.

The symposium in Rome in 1961 accumulated such a crowd of people that the idea of a true symposium - i.e. every speaker having free time to speak, free time to discuss - had to be abandoned. It became -again according to Lindgren - a common congress, and so it has remained.

On the topic of symposia, George Fredzell at Elema Schönander and father of the filmchanger, Mimer Orbix etc. recalled a memory from New York. A Mimer was to be exhibited and arrived in New York in two containers painted in the Swedish colours - blue and yellow. They were delivered 36 hours before the opening but were found to be too large to possibly pass the doors of the hotel. The delivery company simply left them outside in the street and succeeded in blocking the morning

traffic on a large part of Manhattan. The settlement with the New York police was said to be "cumbersome".

I do have a lot of historical facts but I am sure you will find them elsewhere. I find it personally difficult to know which ones may be relevant.

From all congresses and meetings I have attended there is also a lot of memories, few tragic one, many funny.

At the symposium in Rome a company - I have forgotten which - invited lets say 1000 persons for a party. More than 2000 came listening to an Italian tenor sitting in a gondola rented from Venice and brought to Rome and placed in a swimming pool of the Hilton Hotel.