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AJNR Am J Neuroradiol 1991, 12 (5) 845-847

<http://www.ajnr.org/content/12/5/845.citation>

This information is current as
of June 5, 2025.

Special Article

The World Federation of Neuroradiological Societies: A Proposal

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Neuroradiology is that branch of diagnostic radiology that deals with disorders of the central nervous system [1]. It embraces all techniques for imaging the brain and spinal cord, their respective vessels, the cranium and spine, and the organs of special sense. Practitioners include interventional (surgical) neuroradiologists, pediatric neuroradiologists, and many individuals with expertise in head and neck radiology.

In North America and Europe, neuroradiology was one of the earliest organized subspecialties in radiology. It has given birth to a number of international scientific journals and has a long history of sponsoring world congresses in the form of the Symposium Neuroradiologicum. It, more than any other specialty of radiology, has energized, altered, and strengthened the newer imaging techniques of CT and MR, and is developing well-defined sections of particular interest and expertise and closer relationships with people and organizations involved in imaging of the head, neck, spine, and blood vessels.

At present, the many continental, national, and local societies and the Symposium Neuroradiologicum have their own agendas. Concurrent with the burgeoning strength of clinical, technical, and educational components of neuroradiology, there is an increasing complexity of its medical, political, financial, and academic aspects. There are also frequent conflicts in scheduling of congresses and educational programs. For these reasons, the time seems ripe to form a World Federation of Neuroradiological Societies to coordinate and assist meetings, research, and educational efforts, and to disseminate scholarly information in neuroradiology. The

Federation could also serve as a political and professional voice for our specialty worldwide and at the same time provide financial stability and planning for the Symposium Neuroradiologicum. The following paragraphs outline the history of organized neuroradiology, its current status, and a proposal to ensure its future health.

Historical Background

The history of neuroradiology has been recounted in a number of treatises, articles, and speeches [1-7]. Three important landmarks stand out in this panorama: the first Symposium Neuroradiologicum; the founding of the American Society of Neuroradiology (ASNR), and the founding of the European Society of Neuroradiology (ESNR).

The Symposium Neuroradiologicum had its start in Brussels in 1939. It was organized by the otolaryngologists Thierpont and Chaussé. That was followed by a second Symposium in Rotterdam in 1949. Since then, symposia have been orchestrated by their past presidents, who choose the meeting site, and the president of each subsequent symposium. The individual selected then becomes solely responsible for its financial, social, and scientific aspects.

The ASNR was founded in New York in 1962 and celebrated its Silver Anniversary there in 1987. Next to the Society of Pediatric Radiology (SPR), it is the oldest radiological specialty society in North America. It is of interest to note that the SPR (founded in 1958) and the European Society of

Received April 10, 1991; revision requested April 11, 1991; revision received May 15, 1991; accepted May 16, 1991.

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Pediatric Radiology held their first conjoint meeting in Toronto in 1987. Its inauguration and planning were based on the model of the Symposium Neuroradiologicum.

The ESNR was founded in Colmar in 1969, and this year it meets in Zurich for its 17th annual meeting. The ESNR includes members from all of the countries of the now "greater Europe."

The first International Neurological Congress met in Basel in 1931, and accommodated all neurologically oriented surgeons and physicians interested in the central nervous system. However, a change occurred in its name and form in 1957.

The historical course of the Symposium Neuroradiologicum is interesting. The fifth Symposium met conjointly with neurologists, neurosurgeons, and neuropathologists, and was part of the First International Congress of Neurological Sciences in Brussels in 1957. Prior to that time, in 1955, the neurosurgeons formed what was to become an independent World Federation of Neurosurgical Societies and initially held a conjoint meeting with the First International Neurological Congress in 1957. This first and last conjoint meeting, continued as the World Federation of Neurosurgical Societies Second International Congress held independently in Washington in 1961. A World Federation of Neurology then proceeded separately, and the Symposium Neuroradiologicum continued as an independent event. The World Federation of Neurosurgical Societies International Congress continues to flourish and the Federation as a whole is successful and effective.

The ASNR met conjointly with the American Association of Neurological Surgeons in 1969. It subsequently blended its annual scientific and business meeting with the Symposium Neuroradiologicum in 1964 in New York, in 1974 in Uruguay, and in 1982 in Washington.

The ESNR met conjointly with the Symposium Neuroradiologicum in 1970, 1974, 1978, 1982, 1986, and recently in 1990, each time without its own separate scientific program. It will meet conjointly with, and blend its scientific programs with, the 12th International Congress of Head and Neck Radiology in Zurich in 1991.

The Present

The remarkable clinical and technical advances in, and sophistication of, neuroradiology were recounted recently by Taveras [1]. However, he expressed concern about the effect and amount of future basic research in neuroradiology and emerging turf battles. He welcomed interventional neuroradiology and head and neck radiology as intimately related persuasions, and outlined training norms. To his own views, he added those of present-day leaders in neuroradiology—Grietz, Newton, Cronqvist, Hilal, and du Boulay. Cronqvist, the immediate past president of the ESNR, has expressed an urgent need for all neuroradiological and associated organizations within greater Europe to consolidate.

It would seem appropriate and necessary to take the next step and expand his concept to embrace the world as a whole, involving all groups and organizations of radiologists trained and qualified in imaging and in procedures relative to

diseases of the central nervous system, be they of pediatric, interventional, or head and neck persuasion.

Neuroradiology is a vital clinical and academic pursuit. European, American, and many other national and continental societies are now either strong or increasing in strength. Significant economic changes have occurred or are about to occur in Europe and elsewhere in the world. Fiscal constraints in health care are greater now than before and are concomitant with an increase in the cost of medical care. This is a particular concern to neuroradiology. These factors, coupled with the increasing need for neuroradiological education and research, the establishment of standards of practice, credentialing, and the continuing recruitment of the best young physician-scientists indicate, indeed possibly demand, a coordinated, informed, and purposeful alliance within the global neuroradiology community. The continuing and increasing effectiveness and prominence of neuroradiology in radiology, and indeed in medicine as a whole, is a present priority.

The Proposal

Building on the strong foundations of the ASNR and the ESNR, the formation of a World Federation of Neuroradiological Societies is proposed. A federation is defined as a polity in which several groups (states, societies) form a unity, that is, band together for some common purpose, but remain independent in internal affairs. The World Federation of Neuroradiological Societies (hereinafter referred to as "the Federation") would in its broadest concept embrace worldwide societies and formal organizations (not individuals) composed of neuroradiologists, as well as associated neuroscience societies in which the majority of members are neuroradiologists.

The objectives of the Federation are encompassed by the broad statement that its purpose shall be the advancement of neuroradiology in all its aspects and the representation of neuroradiology throughout the world on matters of common interest by: (a) establishing and maintaining cooperation between neuroradiological organizations worldwide; (b) directing and enhancing the prominent position of neuroradiology within the radiological community through the appointment of leaders in neuroradiology worldwide as officers and committee members of the Federation; (c) exchanging and disseminating knowledge and ideas in the field of neuroradiology; (d) developing the best possible standards of neuroradiological facilities and practice; (e) recommending and encouraging optimum standards of education, training, and research in neuroradiology and its allied sciences; (f) providing appropriate neuroradiological training and education in allied countries requesting aid; (g) facilitating personal associations between neuroradiologists throughout the world; and (h) supporting scientific symposia and annual scientific meetings of member neuroradiological organizations.

An integral, continuing, and periodic assembly will be necessary to conduct matters of academic, political, and organizational concerns, and this could be in the form of the current Symposium Neuroradiologicum. This melding of an existing scientific forum and a worldwide organization such as the Federation would certainly necessitate the enshrinement of

the history and of the presidents of previous symposia, acknowledging their enormous contributions to, and influence on, neuroradiology. The future of the Symposium Neuroradiologicum would be enhanced by the support, coordination, contributions, and resources of the Federation and thereby ensure its continuity and effectiveness within an increasingly competitive academic and financial arena. The requirements for conducting the Symposium are now beyond the resources and efforts of a single person or small group of persons; thus, such integration will also provide the Federation with a forum and an effective means of continuing formal activities. It needs to be stressed that, in such a proposal, there is no need for the Federation to become involved in or attempt to influence the year-to-year internal functions and activities of each member society. However, each member society, by request, may avail itself of such resources and assistance of the Federation as may be possible, and as outlined in its objectives and purposes.

Furthermore, it is proposed that there be a governing council of elected representatives of member societies, which shall elect an executive committee composed of the officers of the Federation and the president of the Symposium. The council, assisted by the past presidents, shall also elect the officers and determine the sites of future symposia.

A complex but comprehensive constitution and set of by-laws should be drawn up and presented to the executive committees of the ASNR and ESNR for their consideration and possible subsequent presentation at their respective annual general meetings. If such a proposal is considered to be appropriate in concept, the preliminary constitution and bylaws would be refined by a special conjoint ad hoc com-

mittee formed by the ASNR and ESNR and other appropriate representatives. A sequential course of action can then be planned, designed to culminate in the official foundation of the Federation at the next Symposium Neuroradiologicum in Japan in 1994.

The advice and counsel of the past and already designated future presidents of the Symposium will be valuable as will that of representatives of other official neuroradiological societies and organizations worldwide. The Federation, with the leaders in neuroradiology as its officers and council, is suggested as a timely and necessary institution to consolidate our strength, organize our resources, coordinate our progress into the future, and provide a cohesive and effective political force within the global radiological and medical communities. Most important, the Federation will leave a suitable and effective legacy to the extraordinarily talented younger neuroradiologists, present and future, who will confront the global challenges of the twenty-first century.

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