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Journal of Neural Transmission: A scientific journal devoted to the translation of neuroscience into clinical practise since 1950.

By Peter Riederer, Silvia Schilgerius, Alois Sillaber, Neil Solomon, Etienne Hirsch and Christian Riederer

In one of the most iconic experiments in neurology, Arvid Carlsson showed in the 1950s that rabbits were tranquilized after injections with the antipsychotic drug reserpine and that this state was reversed after they had received DL-DOPA. He published these results in a landmark Nature paper in 1957 and went on to conclude in the following years, that L-DOPA would alleviate the syndromes of Parkinson's disease. These findings earned him a share in the Nobel Prize 2000, added a new chapter to the prospering CNS research activities in the 1950s and opened the gate for further investigations and ultimately the clinical investigation for the treatment of Parkinson's disease in the 1960s.

At that eventful times, scientific journals devoted to exclusively enlighten the biochemical mechanisms of neuronal transmission were scarce but some action was centered in Vienna, Austria, where Walther Birkmayer (1910-1996) and Oleh Hornykiewicz (*1926) were conducting seminal investigation on the role of L-DOPA in parkinsonism in the early 1960s. Birkmayer, who directed the Neurological Division of the Vienna Municipal Home for the Aged at Lainz Hospital where he had recorded the first L-Dopa trials together with Hornykiewicz in 1961, was a board member of several journals, one of them being the Acta Neurovegetativa (AN).

The AN was founded in 1950 by the Austrian anatomist Carmen Coronini (1885-1968) and the German physician Alexander Sturm (1901-1973) as a journal devoted to neurovegetative anatomy, physiology, pharmacology and pathology with their endocrine border areas, particularly clinical medicine and focused on experimental original papers adressing neurovegetative problems. The Vienna branch of Springer was its publisher and the 3rd editor alongside Coronini and Sturm was E. Anderson (1954-1967) from Moffet Field, USA, giving the journal an international reach from its foundation on. Manuscripts were submitted in four different languages (German, English, French and Italian) and were collected by Carmen Coronini in Vienna and Alexander Sturm in Wuppertal.

The AN developed soon a noteworthy standing for publishing high profile articles on neurovegetative issues. A prominent role in the development of the journal in the 1960s played J. Ariens Kappers who served as editor from 1963-1975 and had edited a noteworthy supplement volume on the Symposium of Neurohormones and Neurohumors held in Amsterdam in 1967. In all, The AN appeared in 30 Volumes until 1967.

A first important thematic shift occured in 1968, when the Acta Neurovegetative changed its name to „The Journal of Neuro-Visceral Relations“. Walle Nauta (1916-1994), a leading neuroanatomist at the MIT in Boston, USA, had initially recommended a new title for the AN to better suit the American audience but more important was the broader focus of the journal on the multidisciplinary study of the autonomic nervous system and of neuroendocrinology and the journal also aimed to encompass any form of communication between the brain and the viscera. Editors were J. Ariens Kappers (1968 – 1972), Walle J.H. Nauta (1968 – 1972) and K. Fleischhauer (1970 – 1972) and the Journal appeared from 1969 – 1971 with Supplementa as books. At the end of 1971, the journal had sold 425

subscriptions. Nevertheless, the acquisition of scientific papers did not entirely fulfill the initial expectations and it was decided that a more complex reorganisation of the journal was due.

Throughout 1971, bilateral negotiations took place under the leadership of Walther Birkmayer and as one part of the strategic shift he suggested to invite Arvid Carlsson to join the Editorial Board. In a letter from June 15, 1971, Arvid Carlsson agreed to bring in his pharmacological expertise. In a meeting in autumn 1971, in Vienna, Carlsson, Birkmayer and Fleischhauer then discussed fundamental changes including a new title for the journal. Carlsson initially proposed „Journal of Neurohumoral Transmission“ and advocated to include more experimental neurologists working on neural transmission, a field that was gathering more and more attention in the scientific community.

In 1972, the stage was set for the 3rd evolution. The remodeled “Journal of Neural Transmission”, “devoted to the prompt publication of original contributions to our knowledge and understanding of neurohumoral transmission” started with its first edition (Vol 33, 1, 1972) and six scientific articles. It was stated that the journal „is issued at indefinite intervals and consists of loose numbers, for subsequent assembly in volumes“. Surprisingly, no Editorial was published announcing and explaining the new strategy. The journal kept its initial A5 format and its emblematic orange cover. Authors received 100 reprints free of charge and could have ordered additional reprints against payment.

Besides Birkmayer and Carlsson, the Editorial Board consisted of J.A. Kappers, W.J.H. Nauta, O.J. Grüsser and R.J. Wurtmann and an Advisory Board with 30 renowned experts was introduced. Birkmayer himself took over the position of Managing Editor from Fleischhauer, relocated the editorial office back to Vienna (it had moved in 1966 to Amsterdam where A. Kappers worked) and Birkmayer's collaborator Peter Riederer (*1942) was appointed Editorial secretary of JNT in 1973.

From the very beginning on, the „new“ JNT comprised leading physiologists, pharmacologists and clinicians and the journal started to thrive throughout the decades to come. One of the early supporters was Melvin D. Yahr (1917 – 2004) from New York, an internationally renowned physician specialised in movement disorders. His proposal to give Parkinson's disease more room led to a fruitful discussion in the 1980s on how to better categorize different emerging fields within JNT and led to JNT being published in two different sections, a General Section for Basic Neuroscience and a section on PD and Allied Disorders (led by Melvin D. Yahr from 1989 until summer 2003). For a couple of years, both sections were published as different books.

In 1983, with Vol. 56, No.1, Arvid Carlsson took over the responsibilities from Walther Birkmayer as Managing Editor. His appointment was accompanied by some structural and thematic amendments. The board of editors was enlarged to 10 (excluding Carlsson as the managing editor and including Peter Riederer as a new board member) and the journal re-emphasized its commitment to the “interface between basic neuroscience and clinical neurobiology” and also strengthened the focus on psychiatry and psychiatric disorders. Carlsson himself was a prolific writer and contributed some well cited articles in the 1980s. With the help of Springer, the format was enlarged to A4 in the late 1980s, subscriptions tripled, published articles doubled and the journal appeared monthly with supplements on special topics complementing the scientific offer.

Arvid Carlsson led the journal until 2000. He was honoured for his longstanding commitment as “Honorary Editor-in-Chief” and passed his duties on to Peter Riederer, who continued to lead JNT

until today. JNT is electronically available at 9.000+ institutions and continues to be a thriving scientific journal.