The

ARSMB – KVBMG

Royal Association of the Medical Scientific Societies of Belgium

Moves to

Avenue Winston Churchill-laan 11, box 30 - B-1180 Brussels (Uccle/Ukkel)

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In the explosion of rediscovered freedom in 1945, the experience of the war upset and invaded medicine on all sides: pulmonary and cardiac surgery with open thorax, penicillin, curare, modern anaesthesiology. Five of our Masters, each of them rather discreetly sharing the common virus of the literature and medical publication, found themselves in the same position. Loyal frequenters of Libraifac in Brussels or the Fonteyn bookstore in Louvain, they can face this no longer and initially decide to gather all this fertile scientific inheritance of Belgian medicine together into a common centralised library, open to all. Very quickly, this wealth of documentation is enriched by all the journals published by the various (new) societies: then, on 10th November 1945, they amalgamate the leading 16 under the trade name Acta Medica Belgica and become the enthusiastic editors of this collection. By name, these 5 were George Brohée the gastro-enterologist (Brussels), Léon Dekeiser (Brussels), Paul De Moor the surgeon (Brussels), Paul Lambin the internist (Louvain) and Paul Lorthioir (Brussels).

After the many vicissitudes of establishing a registered office, or even a simple office, at 64 Concorde Street (Ixelles), the publication of Acta was taken over by Jos Hilgers, who was succeeded by the mythical Imprimerie des Sciences, of which the proverbial helpfulness of the director, Mr. Charles Schroef has remained legendary. The introduction of offset printing unfortunately got the better of him.

Our colleagues, more experts in medicine than in managing a society, had more and more difficulty in reconciling the two functions and the secretary who joined them, Mr. E. Jacobs followed by Mrs. Jacobs, struggled more and more to take the administration in hand. On her own, her new colleague, a former army accountant, put a little order into these artisan finances, but in 1980 it all collapsed. The Association of the Medical Scientific Societies of Belgium, which in the meantime had been very amiably accommodated by the Solvay Company in the Hotel of the Scientific Societies, at 43 Elysées Fields Street, closed down. Its president, professor Marcel van der Ghinst and its treasurer, Victor Chevalier the podiatrist, called for help.

At the Bordet Institute, Pierre Dor who directs the advance service of major cervical oncology at the University of Brussels, invests himself directly in the secretariat general and takes along two colleagues survivors of the bankruptcy of the clinic Edith Cavell. They will remain only 2 or 3 years. In March 1981, Professor Baron Georges Stellaert acts in concert with Professor M. van der Ghinst and, in addition to his broad national and international academic duties, he takes the torch of the presidency. Finally on March 6, 1982, Victor Chevalier went to meet at the direction of the CONAMU (National Commission for the Emergency Medical Support, Service 900 currently 100) the head of department of Anaesthesiology of the UCL, at the Univ. clinics St. Luc, Pierre De Temmerman and convinced him to tackle the problem of finances.

The team is from the start confronted by a very clear problem: to abscond or to face up to the problem. It decides to take the risk.

From now on, it is no longer question of abandoning oneself to the traditional amateurism and P. De Temmerman calls upon an Accountants office very well-known in Brussels and familiar with the local Service of Control of societies: the Cabinet of Fiscal Studies Brandes which will become later the European Fiscal Cabinet. Accepting to take up the challenge, a collaboration marked with a high level of reciprocal respect and confidence engendered by a great depth of experience will permit, with perseverance and the essential rigor and much prudence, to learn little by little how to make the ASSMB an authentic SME. Healthy, and concerned to effectively maintain its place as a central secretariat for its members, to represent them and to show them to advantage with the authorities. And, if required, to assure their legal, administrative, judicial or tax representation for example, as a strong spokesman with its ± 5.500 members for the 23 societies from which it is, in fact, the emanation.

In july 1987 Solvay took back its building and Pierre Dor negotiated with our friends from the Maison des Médecins for our – this time respectable – premises in the avenue Circulaire, which would urge our surgeon friends to ask if they could join us. Meanwhile he had managed to settle the difficult departure of Mrs. Jacobs, which had made it possible for Annette Hirsch to come and take the secretariat in hand at the beginning of 1984. Annette’s courage and competence enabled her to collaborate, always with determination, in the realistic material and technical development as a function of the increasingly specific services offered to our companies, at the required speed and irrespective of the daily
pressures: professional handling of the submissions, changeover to data processing, accounting software Popsy, the ADSL, the Internet (thanks to the invaluable and unbiased support of the ULB), e-mail, as far as until soon, the computer assisted follow-up of the publication. In parallel, president George Stalpaert defends our interests and keeps control of everything, while H. Kinzinger, G. Wanet, J. Lewalle and R. Fiasse are among the others participating in the development of the ASSMB-VBMWG: the expansion to 2 and then 3 secretaries, the fiftieth anniversary celebrated at the University Foundation in May 1995 and the attribution of the title “Royal” in recognition of 50 years of uninterrupted excellence, the extension of the ARSMB-KVBMG and comfortable furnishings for the large room (1998), reception of Radiology in 2001 and then of Rheumatology. Finally, arrival and nomination, with the new Secretary-general in March 2004, of the new Board of Directors, which completes the new set up: professor Jean-Paul Squifflet (UCL-ULG), who has just left the presidency of the Order of Doctors in French-speaking Brabant, is the new president, the doctors and professors Martine De Muynck (RUG) and Dirk Van Raemdonck (KUL) become vice-presidents, Michel Hoogmartens (KUL) who is responsible for "Artsen Zonder Vakantie", henceforth shares his work in Africa twice a year with the Secretariat-general, while Gilbert Chantrain (ULB), the head of the Oto-Rhino-Laryngology service at the St Pierre Hospital will, from now on, lead the treasury.

The Royal Association of the Medical Scientific Societies of Belgium is at the same time the international publisher of the “Acta Medica Belgica” of which it relieves you of all commercial and thus fiscal aspects. It is, in addition, your central secretariat that, after having obtained advantages for its members, e.g. the reduction of almost 50% of the printing and publicity budgets, will resolutely help them tomorrow to convincingly group together the efforts of all, unavoidable regrouping (cfr. Bologna) to approach the immediate future and its challenges: new methods of organisation or publication and communication, long-term archiving, allowing free and increasingly swift access to up-to-date medical information.

“The future does not emerge from nothing, it is the past of tomorrow” says the wise proverb.

The ARSMB-KVBMG is our common, invaluable and fragile heritage. It is for you, in your turn, to make the irreplaceable inheritance bequeathed by our elders bear fruit, with determination and enthusiasm.

From 1st April 2007, we await you in our new building: avenue Winston Churchill-laan 11, box 30, in B-1180 Brussels (Uccle/Ukkel).

Professor Pierre De Temmerman
Outgoing Treasurer
Director ARSMB – KVBMG