

“You Live Life Going Forwards and Understand It Looking Backwards!” The Sixtieth Anniversary of the World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists: 60 Years of Cooperation Between the International Anesthesia Research Society and the World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists

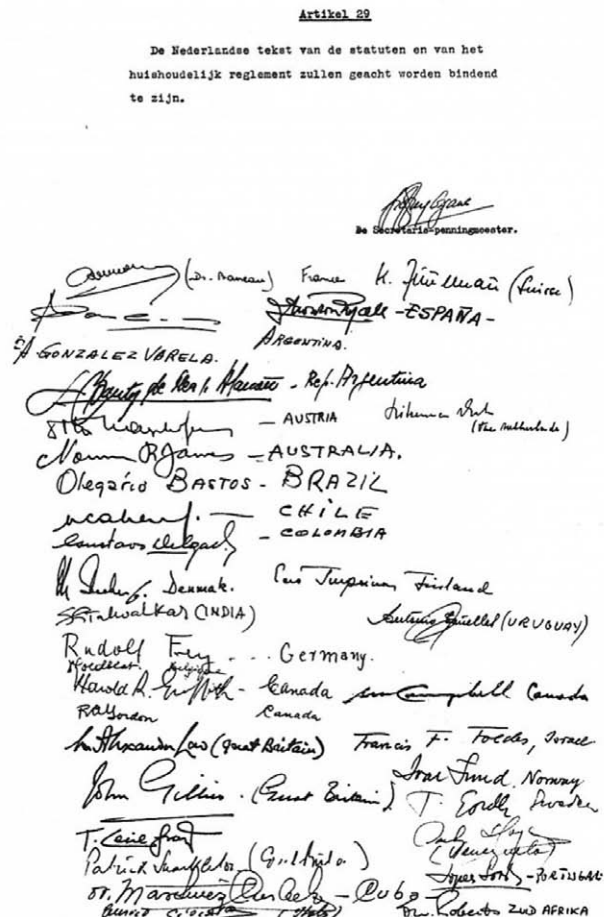
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In May 2015, the World Health Organization (WHO) adopted resolution A68/15: “Strengthening Emergency and Essential Surgical Care and Anesthesia as a Component of Universal Health Coverage.”¹ To make this historic resolution a reality, the World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists (WFSA) unites anesthesiologists around the world to provide universal access to safe anesthesia. This mission is a partnership among the WFSA, national anesthesiology societies, and other organizations that share these objectives.

THE PAST

The founder of the International Anesthesia Research Society (IARS), Dr. Francis Hoeffler McMechan (1879–1939), was a great believer in increasing international collaboration among anesthesiologists.¹ Initially, his efforts were focused on the United States and Canada. Subsequent travels took him to South America, Australia, and Europe to advocate formation of an international organization.² In 1936, Robert Monard, a French surgeon, attended an IARS meeting in Philadelphia and suggested that the French should organize a similar meeting in Paris.^{2,3} Sadly, the Second World War delayed these innovative plans until 1951, when an international anesthesiology congress was finally held in Paris. Two weeks before that meeting, a combined meeting of the IARS and the Association of Anesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland had been held in London, and further discussions

took place involving representatives from 15 countries at which Harold Griffith (1894–1985) took the chair.² After the



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Figure 1. Signatures approving the first Statutes of the World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists (reproduced with permission from WFSA).

¹Available at: <http://www.who.int/surgery/en/>. Accessed July 4, 2015



Figure 2. Attendees of the First World Congress of the WFSA in Scheveningen, Netherlands (reproduced with permission from WFSA).

Paris meeting, an Interim Committee was set up to investigate the possibility of an international society, and again Griffith took the chair.⁴ He had been President of the IARS in 1948 and Chair of the Board of Trustees from 1949 to 1952. The committee also included 5 other anesthesiologists: Alexandre Goldblatt (Belgium), John Gillies (United Kingdom), Torsten Gordh (Sweden), Jacques Boreau (France), and Ritsema van Eck (Netherlands), together with Jean-Francois Delafresnaye (France), who was the secretary of the Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences (an international nongovernmental organization set up by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and WHO in 1949).⁴ After surveying information from all the current national anesthesiology societies around the world, the Interim Committee created a set of bylaws for a world federation (Fig. 1), which came into being on the last day of the first World Congress of Anesthesiologists, held in Scheveningen in the Netherlands from September 5 to 10, 1955 (Fig. 2).^{5,6} Representatives from 26 countries signed the initial document, which was approved by Queen Juliana of the Netherlands, and the new organization was registered in that country.

The aim of this new Federation was to create an equality of anesthesia care for all patients across the world. The IARS provided tremendous financial and organizational support for the process.⁷ A large number of delegates to the first World Congress were supported by the IARS, and the Proceedings of the Congress were also published by the IARS. The relationship between the IARS and the WFSA was renewed in 2014 with a new memorandum of understanding on an affiliation between the 2 organizations.⁸

THE PRESENT

The WFSA has grown substantially in the ensuing 60 years. The WFSA represents hundreds of thousands of anesthesiologists from >140 countries worldwide. The WFSA has sponsored a World Congresses every 4 years all around the globe. More details about the diverse WFSA programs promoting global anesthesia safety can be found on its website.^b

^bAvailable at: www.wfsahq.org. Accessed July 4, 2015

The 60th anniversary of the WFSA requires a celebration! The celebratory 60th Anniversary logo of the WFSA appears on the cover of this issue of *Anesthesia & Analgesia*.

THE FUTURE

The WFSA is investing in innovation and research supporting universal access to safe anesthesia. To share the knowledge and make it available to patients worldwide, a new section in *Anesthesia & Analgesia* now focuses on global health. The goal of this new section is to transfer basic science and clinical medical knowledge into everyday clinical practice worldwide.

Advances in anesthesia care are for everyone, not just patients in high-income countries. The WFSA, the IARS, and *Anesthesia & Analgesia* share this vision. We are committed to improve the quality of life of patients through the provision of safe anesthesia services. This commitment has no borders. Our commitment brings us full circle to May's momentous resolution. We add our "yea" votes to May's unanimous vote of the WHO General Assembly, resolved to "strengthening emergency and essential surgical care and anesthesia as a component of universal health coverage."

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