

The founding and early history of the European Society for Paediatric Nephrology (ESPN)

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Abstract The founding of the European Society for Paediatric Nephrology (ESPN) in 1967 was the milestone for pediatric nephrology in Europe. Now, at the beginning of the 21st century, more than 2,000 European pediatricians in 46 European countries work in the field of pediatric nephrology, and approximately 500 of these meet regularly at the annual ESPN meetings. Half of these 2,000 pediatricians work in about 200 specialized pediatric nephrology centers in tertiary care units, whereas the other half work in secondary pediatric care, with a special interest in common renal diseases. In this article the founding and early years of the ESPN are outlined and include the

structure of the first ten annual ESPN meetings from 1967–1976. Historical reports are given by five pioneers who were first-hand witnesses of the development of pediatric renal care in Europe.

Keywords Pediatric nephrology · European Society for Paediatric Nephrology · History · Congress · Founding

A short history of pediatrics in Europe

It was only in the late 19th century that the care of children was provided within the specialty of pediatrics [1]. The first pediatric Chairs were created in Europe at the end of the 19th century, and the first international medical congress discussing common pediatric problems took place in 1884 in Copenhagen. The first pediatric journal was the *Jahrbuch für Kinderheilkunde* (Berlin, Germany), which later became *Annales Paediatrici* and then *Paediatric Research*. It wasn't until 1910 that the International Pediatric Association (IPA) was founded by Henri Hutinel, and the first International Pediatric Congress was held in Paris in 1912. As a result of growing nationalism at the beginning of the 20th century, leading to the First World War, it took until 1930 before the second international congress of pediatrics was held in Stockholm. In the 1930s, there were two more international congresses, in London and Rome, before fascism brought a stop to the process of international unity in pediatrics [2].

At the 1950 IPA meeting in Zurich, when Guido Fanconi was Congress President, the European pediatricians started to think about European cooperation in general pediatrics

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and in pediatric subspecialty care [3]. Interestingly, it took 15 years for the first European pediatric subspecialty societies, including pediatric nephrology [4], to be founded.

In the divided post-war Europe of the 1960s, individual pediatricians working at university level started to create academic connections between East and West, which were usually restricted to meetings on the occasion of international congresses. Joint research ventures were rare, and the exchange of research fellows led “one way” from East to West, with several pediatricians not returning to their home country. Exchange programs for medical students living in eastern and western countries were restricted to a few centers and were mainly based on personal friendships between heads of departments rather than on official exchange programs. After the fall of the “Iron Curtain” in 1990, cooperation between East and West European pediatricians expanded from a few elderly university pediatricians to a great number of young and talented pediatricians-in-training from all over Europe.

Since 1976 the Union of National European Paediatric Societies and Associations (UNEPSA) has acted as an umbrella organization for the national pediatric societies. At the beginning of the 21st century there is still no European Paediatric Society offering individual membership to more than the 170,000 pediatricians working in today’s Europe of 46 countries with more than 170 million children under 18 years of age [5].

A short history of nephrology

Nephrology developed slowly [6], and, after the Second World War, a few teams of internists concerned with renal care in adults began organizing on both sides of the Atlantic. In Europe the French-speaking countries (France, Belgium, Switzerland) created the “Société de Néphrologie” in 1949 in Paris; the British inaugurated the “Renal Association” in 1950; Italy, Germany and Spain founded their national societies of nephrology in 1957, 1961 and 1964, respectively. In the USA, the American Society of Nephrology was founded in 1966. The members of these societies usually met annually, but other international exchanges were scarce. A crucial change occurred in 1960 when J. Hamburger from Paris and R.S. Mach from Geneva decided to organize the “First International Symposium of Nephrology” taking place in Evian and Geneva. This initiative boosted the specialty of nephrology, because the members of the national nephrology societies decided to meet every 3 years, in Europe, America or other continents, in turn.

In the 1960s, the clinical management of patients with renal diseases, both adults and children, was handled mostly by general physicians. There were extremely few

places in the world where academic pediatric nephrology was practiced. Pediatric nephrology had emerged as a distinct subspecialty in most countries by the 1970s [4]. It took a few years to convince the “adult nephrologists” that pediatric nephrologists were not rivals but merely pediatricians concerned with the specific problems of congenital or acquired kidney diseases in children. The founding of the European Society for Paediatric Nephrology (ESPN) in 1967 and of the American Society of Pediatric Nephrology in 1969 was the milestones for pediatric nephrology worldwide. Now, at the beginning of the 21st century, more than 2,000 European pediatricians in 46 European countries work in the field of pediatric nephrology, and approximately 500 of these meet regularly at the annual ESPN meetings. Half of these 2,000 pediatricians work in about 200 specialized pediatric nephrology centers in tertiary care units, whereas the other half work in secondary pediatric care, with a special interest in common renal diseases [7].

In this article the founding and early years of the ESPN are outlined, after unpublished accounts on the history of the ESPN and historical references from the ESPN newsletters and congress programs had been analyzed. Comments were requested by one of the authors (J.H.H.E.) from five pioneers who were first-hand witnesses from different countries of the early years of pediatric renal care in Europe. Important sources of this historical account are an additional record of the ESPN’s first 21 years by Gavin Arneil, a report given by Ian Houston at the 27th annual meeting in 1993, and the material presented on the ESPN website <http://espn.uwcm.ac.uk/>.

The beginning of pediatric nephrology in Britain, and the formation of the European Society for Paediatric Nephrology (ESPN) in 1967 (by G.A.)

Pediatric nephrology in Britain may be dated from 1917. In that year the world’s first recorded renal biopsies with histological studies were begun by Campbell at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Glasgow, Scotland. Six years later, Wilfred Sheldon’s unit in England followed suit. In the 1930s Glasgow conducted a large study of edematous glomerulonephritis (nephrotic syndrome) in children. In 1950 a pediatric nephrology team was formed at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children and consisted of a pathologist (Derrie MacDonald), a microbiologist (L. P. Studzinski) and a pediatrician (Gavin Arneil). At that time the only other two active renal teams in Europe were those of Niilo Hallman in Helsinki and Pierre Royer and Renée Habib in Paris. By 1960, teams were active in London, Birmingham, Stockholm, and elsewhere. Between 1952 and 1960 the Glasgow unit published frequently, attracting worldwide

attention. Subjects included the first European publications on the use of corticosteroids, including long-term results and a study of 164 children with nephrotic syndrome [8].

In 1956 and 1958 Gavin Arneil participated in a meeting of the National Nephrosis Foundation in New York and then toured pediatric nephrology centers in Boston, Toronto, Cleveland, San Francisco and Los Angeles, exchanging information with pioneers such as Janeway, Barnett, Riley, Clark, Heymann and Littman. This set up a British–American entente that has lasted 50 years, and encouraged Henry Barnett to take a sabbatical year in London in 1965. Around 1960 the Glasgow domination of British pediatric nephrology was diluted, as units expanded in London (Stewart Cameron), Birmingham (Richard White), Manchester (Ian Houston) and elsewhere. All the British centers became increasingly enmeshed in the development of peritoneal dialysis, hemodialysis and kidney transplantation services. It was in 1973 that the British Association for Paediatric Nephrology was developed [9].

The idea of a ESPN first occurred to Gavin Arneil in the USA in 1958, when he realized that Americans knew more European pediatric nephrologists than he did. Post-war problems, such as the East and West European divide, multiple languages (Russian, German, French and English) and adequate resources, were insoluble at that time. Postgraduate students from all over the world attended the Glasgow unit from 1953 onwards. In 1965 Maya Ignatova, from Moscow, visited Glasgow. When the idea of an organization that would include Eastern Europe was discussed with her, she was strongly supportive and felt

she could involve the USSR, which would help with other communist countries.

In 1966 a meeting was held in London to form the International Study of Kidney Disease in Children (ISKDC), at which pediatric nephrologists from Britain, France, Finland, Sweden, the Netherlands and elsewhere were present. Henry Barnett in New York became the Director of the ISKDC, Renée Habib became the European consultant pathologist and Gavin Arneil the British Director. Although this brought together nephrologists from several European countries, no plans were made to form an organization; nevertheless, the ISKDC represented an important link between Europe and the USA.

The need for the ESPN was reinforced after the ISKDC meeting. When the European Society of Endocrinology met in Glasgow, in 1966, Gavin Arneil entertained a range of visiting pediatricians at his home. Amongst them was Harmen Tiddens from Utrecht. They discussed the possibility of setting up an all-Europe pediatric nephrology society, and Harmen agreed to help to do so, contributing his linguistic, diplomatic, organizational (and terpsichorean) skills to complement Gavin's enthusiasm and initiative. Unfortunately, Harmen had to go home to Utrecht in the Netherlands the next day! Fortunately, he soon returned for a weekend (Fig. 1), and together they listed the European pediatric nephrologists they knew and wrote to well-informed pediatricians in countries where no pediatric nephrologist was known for information on the local nephrologist. In addition, they wrote to the leaders in pediatric nephrology in almost all European countries, asking if they would like to meet to form a society to

Fig. 1 **a** Gavin Arneil and Harmen Tiddens in 1967 in Glasgow [Copyright Arneil GC (2006)]. **b** Harmen Tiddens 1968 [10]



promote the speciality in Europe. Those people included Domokos Boda, Hungary; Horst Bickel, Federal Republic of Germany; Luis Callis, Spain; Stewart Cameron, England; Peter Chohnoky, Hungary; Ferdinand Demant, Czechoslovakia; Emile Gautier, Switzerland; Peter Grossmann, German Democratic Republic; Niilo Hallman, Finland; Maya Ignatova, USSR; Pierre Royer, France; Gajko Vlatkovic, Yugoslavia; Jan Winberg, Sweden; Marian

Wojnarowski, Poland; Teresa Wyszynska, Poland, and a number of others.

Everyone wanted to get started as soon as possible. Harmen Tiddens joined Gavin Arneil in Glasgow for a weekend, late in 1966, so that, between them, they could draft the proposed Constitution, set up a Founding Council and organize the first international meeting of pediatric nephrologists in Glasgow attended by 36 of the 46 founder

Table 1 Program of the foundation meeting of the ESPN in 1967 in Glasgow

SCIENTIFIC PROGRAMME

Monday, 18th September

Morning Session: NEPHROTIC SYNDROME

Chairman: Professor Horst Bickel, Germany.

- 9.10 (1) Stewart Cameron (England): Neonatal nephrotic syndrome.
 9.30 (2) Renée Habib (France): The concept of membranous glomerulonephritis.
 9.50 (3) Minna Yssing (Denmark): Protein metabolism in children with the nephrotic syndrome.
 10.10 (4) Jussi Vilska (Finland): Osmotic resistance of the erythrocytes in congenital and acquired nephrosis.
 10.30 (5) Karel van Acker (Belgium): The influx of hormone treatment of the idiopathic nephrotic syndrome.

Coffee, 10.50–11.10

- 11.. (6) Teresa Wyszynska (Poland): Nephrotic syndrome in 170 children.
 11.30 (7) John Soothill (England): A controlled trial of treatment for steroid resistant nephrotic syndrome.
 11.50 (8) Alfred Rosenkranz (Austria) Biochemical, functional and morphological studies of nephrotic syndrome in children.
 12.10 (9) Richard White (England): Progressive sclerosing glomerulonephritis.

Lunch, 12.50–2.10

Afternoon Session: *Chairman:* Professor Emile Gautier, Switzerland.

- 2.10 (10) Malte Kienitz (Germany) Antibacterial antibodies in pyelonephritis in childhood.
 2.30 (11) Thor-Oistein Endsjo (Norway): 101 Children with urinary tract infection.
 2.50 (12) Harry Stark (Israel): Endemic childhood urolithiasis in Israel.
 3.10 (13) Marian Wojnarowski (Poland): Problems in the diagnosis of tuberculosis infection of the renal tract.
 3.30 (14) Ihsan Dogramaci (Turkey): Nephropathy encountered in the treatment of neonatal tetanus.
 Tea, 3.50–4.10
 4.10 (15) Gerhard Stalder (Switzerland): Haemolytic uraemia syndrome.
 4.30 (16) Victor Courtecuisse (France): Ultrastructural aspects of thrombotic microangiopathy of the kidneys.
 4.50 (17) Andreas Fanconi (Switzerland): Effect of hydrochlorothiazide on renal tubular acidosis of "Fanconi Syndrome".
 5.10 (18) René Kuijten (Netherlands): Immunofluorescent studies in renal disease in childhood.

Tuesday, 19th September

Morning Session: *Chairman:* Dr. Jan Winberg, Sweden.

- 10.50 (19) Hans J. Bremer (Germany): New thin-layer chromatography method for aminoaciduria and aminoacidaemia.
 11.10 (20) Oskar Oetliker (Switzerland): Changes of haemodynamic parameters associated with the antinatriuresis of portal vein constriction in salt-loaded dogs.
 11.30 (21) Wolfgang Hagge (Germany): Treatment of D.L.E. complicated by nephritis in children.
 11.52 (22) Chung Lam (Scotland): Recurrent haematuria or focal nephritis.
 12.10 (23) Ferdinand Demant (Czechoslovakia): The place of the kidney in the metabolism of citric acid in infants.
 12.30 Peritoneal Dialysis Demonstration.

Lunch, 12.50–2.40

Afternoon Session: *Chairman:* Professor Niilo Hallman.

- 2.20 (24) Ian Houston (England): Hydrogen ion excretion and growth retardation.
 2.40 (25) Juan Soriano (Spain): Functional evaluation of renal tubular acidosis: a new classification.
 3.00 (26) Nils Svenningsen (Sweden): Some aspects in acid-base homeostasis in premature infants with respect to renal function.
 3.20 (27) Jans Troelstra (Netherlands): Measurement of glomerular filtration rate with use of vitamin B₁₂.
 3.40 (28) Sheamus Dundon (Eire): Phosphate tubular reabsorption.
 4.00 (29) Henri Mathieu (France): Effects of NH₄Cl load in the renal handling of phosphate and calcium in the rat.
 4.20 (30) Anita Aperia (Sweden): Therapeutic implications of studies on tubular function in renal dysplasia and pyelonephritis.

Tea, 4.40–5.00

- 5.00 *Guest Lecture: "Paediatric Nephrology, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow".* Professor Henry L. Barnett, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, New York, U.S.A.
-

members from 22 European countries. This all had to be completed within 10 months! In that weekend they worked out a plan of campaign and the form of the 3-day meeting. The Constitution was based on three principles, as follows:

1. There should be a single-language Society to ensure free communication, discussion and easy exchange of scientific data and to promote friendship, the key to successful cooperation. English was chosen as the most likely international language of the future.
2. The Society should be restricted in membership and not open to all, in order to permit reasonably ordered growth and development. Although there was only a small number of pediatric nephrologists in Europe in 1966, it was realized that, 20 years later, there might be a hundred or more. Initiating a large society and including those with a peripheral interest in pediatric nephrology would prevent the expert informal group. A degree of expertise in pediatric nephrology was therefore made obligatory, with each member giving a scientific paper in English at the Foundation Meeting or subsequent meeting prior to becoming a member.
3. All West and East European countries should be included. Each country was asked to send at least one representative to the Foundation meeting, even if pediatric nephrology was not well developed in 1966, in order to encourage local growth and development.

This was a difficult decision, taken with an eye to the future, which caused irritation to some who felt they were uniquely expert and who favored an “elitist” club as being more important than the spread of development and progress throughout Europe. Decisions had to be taken on boundaries, and Turkey and Israel were included.

Given these priorities, the Constitution was easily written, with a Secretary to organize the Society, with an Assistant Secretary to act also as Treasurer. A council of six from a variety of countries and holding office for a few years only was decided on. The President would be the person responsible for the Annual Scientific Meeting. The Foundation Secretary and President would be Gavin Arneil and the Assistant Secretary Harmen Tiddens, keeping the responsibility for the successful organization and development of ESPN and the first meeting squarely in their hands. The four other Foundation Councillors were Niilo Hallman, Jan Winberg, Emile Gautier and Horst Bickel. Two more would be elected at the Foundation General Meeting. Thus, the rotation of Councillors began. It meant that, by 1970, all Councillors would have been elected at the Annual General Meetings and the Constitution fully implemented. Members of Foundation included pediatric nephrologists from seven countries from behind the “Iron Curtain”, but not all could attend. It was a rush to get the meeting organized and the



Fig. 2 Foundation Meeting, Glasgow, 19th September, 1967. Europe's pediatric nephrologists meet and join together [Copyright Arneil GC (2006)] *Back row, left to right* Jans Troelstra, Csordas?, Ian Houston, Sheamus Dundon, Stewart Cameron, Henry Barnett, H. Menano, Luis Callis, BPA President Steen, Karel van Acker, Richard White, Victor Courtecuisse, Marian Wojnarowski, Anita Aperia,

Teresa Wyszynska, A. Rosenkranz, Ihsan Dogramaci, Nils Svenningsen and Andreas Fanconi. *Front row, left to right* Juan Rodríguez Soriano, Emile Gautier, Renée Habib, Hayim Boichis, Harmen Tiddens, Gavin Arneil (President), Ferdinand Demant, Jan Winberg, Minna Yssing, Malte Kienitz, Horst Bickel, Niilo Hallman, Harry Stark, Jussi Vilksa, Henri Mathieu, René Kuijten, Wolfgang Hagge, Oscar Oetliker

participants from all over Europe contacted, most of whom the organizers had never met, with only 8 months left to do this (Table 1). The Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Glasgow, had the honor of housing the Foundation meeting. The outstanding work of Harmen Tiddens as Secretary made this meeting of the “two Europes” possible. Formal acceptance of the Constitution gave birth to the European Society for Paediatric Nephrology on 19th September, 1967. The very short period of months in which this was achieved was only possible because of the generous support of the ancient (1450 A.D.) University of Glasgow in providing a hall of residence, the lecture theater, a secretary (Stephanie Jibson) and a formal reception in the Bute Hall. The lecture theater was in the new Department of Child Health, the first building arising from the wreckage of the demolished Children’s Hospital, which has been rebuilt.

Sites and topics of the first ten ESPN Meetings (by J.H.H.E.)

After the first ESPN meetings in Glasgow (Figs. 2, 3, 4 and 5), the following meetings were hosted annually, usually in summer or autumn, by one of the founders (Table 2, Figs. 6, 7, 8 and 9). The Paris meeting in 1971 was somewhat special, because it was a joint meeting combining the 5th annual meeting of the ESPN and the 2nd International Symposium of Pediatric Nephrology. In fact, the 1st International Symposium of Pediatric Nephrology had been organized in 1968 in Guadalajara (Mexico) by Gustavo Gordillo. These two symposia expressed well the need for worldwide exchanges among pediatric nephrologists. At the end of the 1971 meeting in Paris, pediatric nephrologists from every continent asked the founder of the ESPN, Gavin Arneil, to design a worldwide organization representing pediatric nephrology. In fact, the International Pediatric Nephrology Association (IPNA) was founded in



Fig. 4 Renée Habib and Richard White, 1967

1974, and, from 1977 onwards, every third year the ESPN meeting joined that of IPNA, and the annual General Assembly of the ESPN was held during the IPNA congress. In 1974, the ESPN organized a joint congress with the European Society for Paediatric Research (ESPR) in Lausanne. The two Congress Presidents were Oscar Oetliker for the ESPN and Emile Gautier for the ESPR. Later on it was decided that there should be no more joint congresses apart from those with IPNA.

The duration of the early ESPN meetings was increased from two to three working days, and the numbers of presentations doubled (Table 3). The front pages of the written meeting programs are shown in Figs. 10 and 11. The structure of the congresses was modified frequently to include state-of-the-art lectures, symposia, and scientific exhibitions, as the poster displays were originally called, to enable the author to get a travel permit as a contributor from some countries. During the first conferences most of the speakers were invited. Later, an increasing number of free oral communications were given by members and guests. Posters were started in 1970. In 1968 several “discussion meetings” (round tables) were introduced, reflecting the workshop-like character of the early con-



Fig. 3 Victor Courtecuisse, Marian Wojnarowski, Renée Habib, Gavin Arneil and Luis Callis in 1967



Fig. 5 Andreas Fanconi, René Kuijten, Richard White, Juan Rodriguez Soriano, Henri Mathieu, Karel van Acker, Emile Gautier in 1967 (from left to right)

Table 2 Sites and Congress Presidents of ESPN meetings from 1967 to 1976

Year	City and country of congress site	President of ESPN meetings
1967	Glasgow, Scotland	Gavin Arneil
1968	Utrecht, Netherlands	Harmen Tiddens
1969	Helsinki, Finland	Niilo Hallman
1970	Heidelberg, Germany	Horst Bickel
1971 ^a	Paris, France	Pierre Royer
1972	Dublin, Ireland	Sheamus Dundon
1973	Strbske Pleso, Czechoslovakia	Ferdinand Demant
1974 ^b	Lausanne, Switzerland	Oscar Oetliker
1975	Cambridge, England	Stewart Cameron
1976	Barcelona, Spain	Luis Callis

^a Joint congress with International Pediatric Nephrology Association

^b Joint congress with European Society of Paediatric Research

gresses (Table 3). Most oral presentations were scheduled to last for 20 minutes, including discussion. The scientific topics of the presentations were mainly related to glomerulonephritis, urinary tract infection and water and electrolyte disturbances (Table 4). The research presented during the congresses was mainly based on clinical, patho-anatomical, biochemical, pharmacological or physiological methods (Table 5). The participants and speakers came from 11–20 countries, mostly in Western Europe in the early days, except in 1973, in Czechoslovakia, where almost half of the participants came from the East (Table 6).

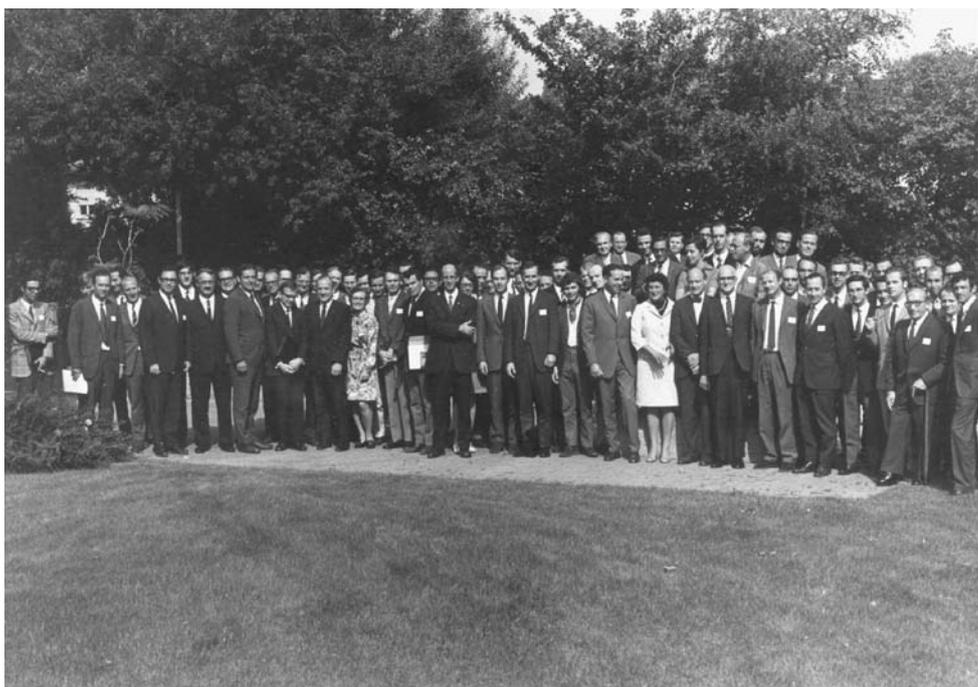
The ESPN council met during the annual meetings under the chair of the President. In 1972 there were 40 members of the ESPN present at the general meeting in Dublin, and 11 members had sent their apologies. The minutes included

a summary of the activities, a financial report, the decisions on future congress sites and the elections of board members. The annual fee for members in 1972 was 50 Swiss francs. ESPN members were regularly provided with Newsletters, ranging from 2–4 per year. These included not only the minutes of annual general meetings but also protocols of the international workshops, such as “Risk-benefit assessment of cyclophosphamide in renal disease” held in 1972 in New York. The names of the early ESPN Secretaries and Councillors are listed in Table 7. Later changes of the Society’ officers are given on the ESPN website <http://espn.uwcm.ac.uk/>.

The number of ESPN members increased steadily from 46, and, in 1972, it was clear that there would be a rather sharp increase in the number of people applying for membership. The ESPN constitution had, so far, only allowed that every member had the right to invite one guest to the annual meetings. ESPN council had come to the conclusion that “a small and informal society like ESPN should avoid rigidity”. It was decided that membership should be given to those pediatricians who had presented a paper during the previous congresses. According to a Newsletter (No. 4, 1972) the ESPN wished “to remain a small and independent organization!”. The main objectives of the ESPN at that time were the organization of high-quality scientific meetings with limited attendance from many countries and the stimulation of good contact and collaboration between members of the Society. The authors believe that these objectives have since been maintained, although the Society has grown enormously, and although the spectrum of members has expanded from well-trained pediatric nephrologists to general pediatricians with a

Fig. 6 Participants of the ESPN meeting in 1969 in Helsinki

Fig. 7 Participants of the ESPN meeting in 1970 in Heidelberg



special interest in nephrology [7]. In 2006 the number of members was 464, and member countries were 38 (32 European and six non-European countries).

The beginning of pediatric nephrology in France (by R.H. and J.H.H.E.)

When Robert Debré (1882–1978)—who had a strong interest in renal physiology—ended his career at the

Hôpital Necker-Enfants Malades in Paris in 1956, Renée Habib and the late Pierre Royer (1917–1995) remained, both pediatricians with a special interest in kidney disease in children. Both had specialized in pediatrics; however, Renée Habib had decided to leave clinical work to become a pathologist and a researcher at the “institut des sciences et de recherche médicale (INSERM)” investigating kidneys from autopsies and, since 1956, from renal biopsies in children. Within 5 years these two different and equally ambitious characters were able to collect vast amounts of

Fig. 8 Participants of the 5th ESPN meeting in 1971 in Paris. *Back row from left to right* Nils Svenningsen, Stewart Cameron, Karel van Acker, Jan Winberg, unknown, Martin Barratt, Richard White, Luis Callis, Henry Mathieu, René Kuijten, Gerhard Stalder, Andreas Fanconi. *Front row* Karl Schärer, Horst Bickel, Ferdinand Demant, Ian Houston, Pierre Royer, Juan Rodriguez Soriano, Oscar Oetliker, Harry Stark, Jussi Vilska, Roy Meadow, Hayim Boichis, Gavin Arneil, Renée Habib, Domokos Boda, Jans Troelstea, Sheamus Dundon, J. F. Soothill, Maya Ignatova, Harmen Tiddens, Emile Gautier, Teresa Wyszynska, unknown, Marian Wojnarowski



Fig. 9 Participants of the ESPN meeting in 1973 in Strbske Pleso



clinical and pathological results, stimulating them to organize the first teaching course on pediatric nephrology in Paris in February 1961 (Fig. 12). The participants from 25 countries were given a 300-page typed manuscript containing virtually all the information known about pediatric kidney diseases in those days. In 1963, the first French textbook of pediatric nephrology was published by Flammarion in Paris (Fig. 13) [11] and was subsequently updated in 1973 and translated into English and several other languages.

Another important event occurred in 1961, when a symposium on the clinical and pathological significance of renal biopsy was organized in London by the Ciba Foundation [12]. The meeting was attended by 30 participants, mainly pathologists from Europe and the USA. Renée Habib presented the results of a study on nephrotic syndrome in children and adults based on the material from

the Necker-Enfants Malades hospital. The importance of renal biopsy in the understanding of glomerular diseases was clearly demonstrated in this symposium.

Since then, many pediatricians from all over the world have come to the training sessions in the hospital Necker-Enfants Malades, and many of them, including Karl Schärer, José Grunberg, Hayim Boichis and Juan Rodriguez Soriano, spent several months or more at the department of pediatrics or at INSERM. In fact, Boichis and Soriano were the first “liaison officers” between French and American pediatric nephrologists when they also spent some time at the Albert Einstein Institute in New York, explaining to the Americans what happened in Paris and vice versa.

Contacts between English and French speaking pediatric nephrologists were scarce in the early 1960s. In fact, language barriers may have been responsible for some delay with regard to communication among European

Table 3 Duration and presentations at the first ten ESPN meetings

Year	Duration in days	Total number of presentations	Number of state-of-the-art lectures	Number of lectures during symposia or workshops	Number of oral free communications	Number of posters	Other
1967	2	33	1	0	30	0	Peritoneal dialysis presentation 2
1968	2	18	1	0	15	0	Discussion round 2
1969	3	26	2	0	18	3	Discussion round 3
1970	3	40	1	16	14	6	3
1971 ^a	3	192	8	82	88	0	Round table 14
1972	3	51	0	0	47	4	0
1973	3	61	0	33	26	2	0
1974 ^a	3	52	0	6	44	0	Round table 2
1975	3	61	4	22	18	3	Read by title 14
1976	4	51	2	7	28	0	Case reports 6 Read by title 8

^a Joint congresses

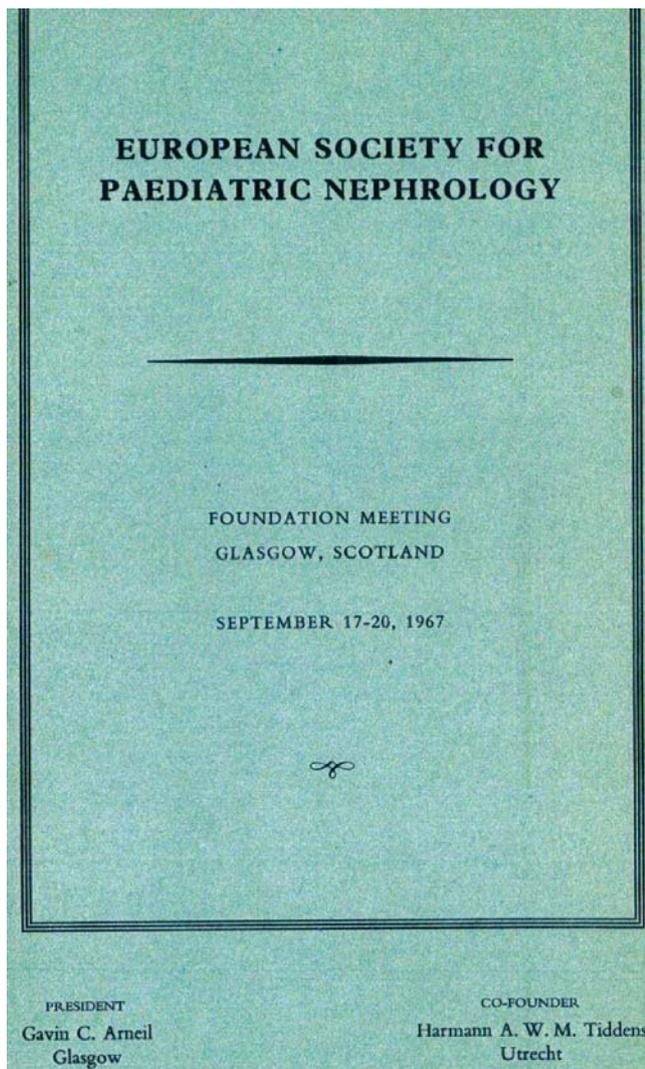


Fig. 10 Program of the 1967 foundation meeting in Glasgow [Copyright Arneil GC (2006)]

pediatric nephrologists. Language barriers played a role in the founding of the French Club of Pediatric Nephrology in 1975, because it was felt that there was a need for the creation of an annual forum for those European pediatricians who were fluent in French and not in English. However, language barriers played only a minor role during the founding process of the ESPN.

In January 1965, Pierre Royer and Renée Habib had been invited to the sixth teaching course organized by Gustavo Gordillo in Mexico City for Latin American pediatricians. At that time, Gustavo Gordillo had already instigated in the old Hospital infantil de Mexico a “Servicio de Nefrología Pediátrica”, with a ward of ten beds where peritoneal dialysis had been successfully installed for the treatment of acute renal failure in children. Pierre Royer discussed his experience in peritoneal dialysis with his colleagues from Latin America, and, during this course, the Latin American attendants discovered the importance of renal biopsy.

A whole article could be written about the American roots of European pediatric nephrology. Owing to a lack of space, only a few examples are given in this article. Holliday [13] and Metcalf [14] reviewed the contribution of individual American pediatricians and physiologists on the regulation of body fluids and electrolytes through the kidneys. Numerous European pediatricians were given the chance to be trained in pediatric nephrology and renal physiology in the USA after the end of World War II. An important link between Europe and America became the foundation of ISKDC in 1965, when Henry Barnett spent a sabbatical in London. Renée Habib, a renal pathologist and pediatrician, Jacob Churg, a pathologist and Richard White, a pediatrician and renal pathologist, met and discussed the patho-anatomical classification of kidney diseases in children [15]. Later on, Jay Bernstein joined this group, which very successfully installed a widely accepted classification of glomerular diseases that was also accepted by adult nephrologists and by other pathologists, such as the German renal pathologist Adalbert Bohle. French and British pediatric nephrologists were also the first to study renal pathology in African children in the 1960s.

The success story of French pediatric nephrology persists until now because Pierre Royer had created a solid ground for clinical pediatric nephrology—based on renal pathophysiology—as a pediatric subspecialty, and Renée Habib had built up renal pathology to a very high standard, thus linking these two basics to form a strong unit. Their success was based on the fact that all those who joined the team, such as Michel Broyer and others, were trained by a combination of both clinical nephrology and renal pathology, which, in those days, was a new concept. In the 1960s and early 1970s many other pediatric nephrologists in the world had been trained in clinical nephrology and renal physiology only. Renée “Nenette” Habib and Pierre Royer could, therefore, be called the “mother and father” of French pediatric nephrology. Their pioneering work was successfully carried on by Michel Broyer.

The beginnings of pediatric nephrology in German-speaking Europe (by A.F. and J.H.H.E.)

In the 19th century German speaking nephrologists, or rather internists with a special interest in renal disease, contributed to the understanding of adult and pediatric nephrology (e.g., Jakob Henle, Johann Lukas Schönlein, Eduard Henoch) [16, 17]. In 1894 Otto Heubner, who described orthostatic proteinuria, became the founding professor of the first University Children’s Hospital in Germany at the Charité in Berlin. At the beginning of the 20th century German-speaking pediatricians focused their scientific activities mainly on water and electrolyte disorder-

Fig. 11 Programs of nine ESPN meetings

ESPN Meetings 1968-1976



ders as well as nephrosis. This term was coined by Friedrich von Müller and further defined by Carl Noeggerath and was later called nephrotic syndrome [18].

Guido Fanconi (1892–1979), from Switzerland, was a pediatrician in the larger sense of the word. He directed the University Children’s Hospital of Zürich from 1929 to 1962. During and after World War II, Zürich was one of the few remaining centers of pediatrics in a devastated Europe, and Guido Fanconi recognized and fulfilled his responsibility to recreate European pediatrics. In 1945 he founded the *Journal Helvetica Pediatrica Acta*, for which he acted as Editor-in-Chief until 1974. Together with his colleague Wallgren in Stockholm, he edited his *Lehrbuch der Pädiatrie*, which appeared in nine printed editions from

1950 to 1972 and was translated into nine languages. In 1954 he invited promising young pediatric investigators to an international scientific symposium on electrolytes. At this occasion, the idea to establish an informal European Club for Pediatric Research arose.

Guido Fanconi’s scientific activities took place from 1920–1970, mainly in a period of time before pediatric research split up into subspecialties. With his qualities of scientific curiosity, accurate clinical observation, great medical knowledge and genuine intuition he managed to discover and describe several new clinical entities in different fields of pediatrics. His interest in electrolyte metabolism stimulated him to study the dysfunctions of the renal tubule. In 1923 he identified a case of renal

Table 4 Scientific topics of 392 oral presentations (symposia and free communications) and posters presented at ESPN meetings from 1967–1976 (excluding the joint meeting with the IPNA in 1971)

Disorder, diagnosis, mode of treatment	Percent of presentations
Glomerulopathies	20%
Urinary tract infection and pyelonephritis	11%
Disturbances of electrolyte and water metabolism	11%
Hemolytic–uremic syndrome	7%
Normal kidney	7%
Tubulopathies	7%
Growth and bone metabolism	5%
Dialysis	5%
Diagnostic methods	5%
Chronic renal failure	3%
Other	3%
Renal transplantation	2%
Drug treatment	2%
Arterial hypertension	2%
Hereditary kidney diseases	2%
Renal hypo-dysplasia	2%
Vasculopathies	2%
Cystic kidney diseases	1%
Psychosocial aspects of kidney diseases	1%
Renal stones	1%
Tubulo-interstitial nephritis	0.5%
Isolated hematuria	0.5%
Acute renal failure	0.2%
Enuresis	0.1%

glycosuria. In 1936 he published reports of three cases of “gluco-amino-phosphate-diabetes” as a global insufficiency of the proximal tubule, which was later (1947) called de Toni-Debré-Fanconi Syndrome or just Fanconi Syndrome. In 1938 he described a salt-losing nephropathy and called it diabetes salinus renalis. In 1951 he discovered, along with two Zürich pathologists, a new familial progressive kidney disease, familial juvenile nephronophthisis. In the same year he published, together with Schlesinger in London, reports of two cases of chronic idiopathic hypercalcemia.

All of Fanconi’s original research work [19] had been done before the term pediatric nephrology had entered common medical vocabulary and before pediatricians of the next generation specializing in kidney diseases called themselves pediatric nephrologists. Guido Fanconi can, therefore, be considered as one of the precursors of pediatric nephrology.

In Germany in the 1960s Horst Bickel in Heidelberg studied metabolic disorders in children, including those with kidney diseases, and Heinz Hungerland in Bonn investigated electrolyte disorders in children with different diseases. However, in 1970, there was no pediatric nephrology working group in Germany. The break-through of pediatric nephrology was prepared by Johannes Brodehl, who studied clearances in children with renal disorders in the 1960s, and by Karl Schärer, who had studied glomerular diseases in the

1960s in Paris and later on became the German member of the ISKDC. In 1971 the first reunion of German pediatricians with a special interest in renal diseases was held in Hanover, and, subsequently, the first collaborative study on the treatment of nephrotic syndrome in children was started. In 1974, the “Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Pädiatrische Nephrologie (APN)” was founded in Stuttgart, and Johannes Brodehl was elected as first Secretary General. Since then, the APN has held annual meetings and has published numerous articles on multicenter therapeutic trials and other topics of pediatric nephrology [20].

The role of pediatric nephrologists from East and North European countries

The Hungarian view (by D.B.)

While the communist regime was raging in Hungary, the double-dealer leadership of Kadar Janos made it possible for Hungarian scientists, and thus also for Domokos Boda, to travel abroad and take part in Western pediatric congresses. Although not present at the founding meeting of the Society, Domokos Boda could attend the early ESPN congresses as an ordinary member because of the recommendation of Ödön Kerpel-Fronius. Without any doubt, these meetings were a determining factor in the professional life of all eastern participants. It was a crucial experience for them to meet the leading experts of pediatric nephrology personally, and to get acquainted with the latest developments in this field. The accuracy of the presentations, the vivid discussions, and the

Table 5 Methodology used in 392 oral presentations and posters presented at ESPN meetings from 1967–1976 (excluding the joint meeting with the IPNA in 1971)

Research fields and methodology	Percent of presentations
Pathological anatomy	13%
Biochemistry	11%
Pharmacology/toxicology	9%
Physiology	8%
Urology/surgery	8%
Immunology	7%
Epidemiology	6%
Endocrinology	6%
Neonatology	6%
Hemato-oncology	6%
Virology/microbiology	5%
Radiology	4%
Dialysis	4%
Genetics	2%
Dietetics	2%
Other	2%
Psychology	1%
Neurology	0.2%
Embryology	0.2%

Table 6 Number of countries sending active participants to ESPN meetings from 1967 to 1976, according to region (*EU* the European Union, defined as 15 countries, *East Europe* former communist block, *Non-EU* and *Non-East Europe* are countries other than the EU or East Europe (Turkey, Switzerland, Norway, Cyprus, Malta, Iceland). *n.a.* not applicable because of joint world congress with the IPNA

Year	Site of congress	European Union	East Europe	Non-EU and non- East Europe	Non-Europe	Total
1967	U.K.	12	2	3	1	18
1968	Netherlands	7	3	0	1	11
1969	Finland	9	4	0	2	15
1970	Germany	11	5	1	1	18
1971	France	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1972	Ireland	11	6	0	1	18
1973	Czechoslovakia	10	9	0	1	20
1974	Switzerland	9	3	1	2	15
1975	Great Britain	11	6	3	2	22
1976	Spain	11	5	1	2	19

friendly relationships between the participants was a completely different world for most East Europeans. An important condition of their attendance at ESPN meetings was that the participants from the East had neither to pay membership fees nor accommodation costs, and even their travel expenses were covered by the Society. Pediatricians like Domokos Boda and other eastern pediatric nephrologists expressed their gratitude for this support, which helped them to stimulate their colleagues when returning home. It should be mentioned that four International Symposia of Pediatric Nephrology of Socialist Countries were held starting from 1977 in Eastern Europe (Eisenach, Bratislava, Budapest, Moscow), independent of the ESPN, but with the participation of West European colleagues.

The Finnish view (by N.H.)

In 1967 pediatrics was just starting to split into subspecialties, and there were only a few places in Europe where academic pediatric nephrology was available. The need for knowledge was apparent, and the ESPN was warmly welcomed. Niilo Hallman’s interest in kidney diseases originated from his research fellowship in 1947–1948 in Boston with Janeway and Gamble. His main research was mineral metabolism in nephrotic children during the disappearance of edema induced by measles. Congenital nephrotic syndrome was his second renal interest, and he became a member of ISKDC. Being also a participant in Guido Fanconi’s mineral metabolism

Table 7 Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries and Councillors of the ESPN in 1967–1976

Secretaries of the ESPN		
1967–71	Gavin C. Arneil,	Glasgow, Scotland
1971–74	Harmen A. W. Tiddens	Utrecht, Netherlands
Assistant Secretaries of the ESPN		
1967–71	Harmen A. W. Tiddens,	Utrecht, Netherlands
1971–76	Andreas Fanconi,	Zurich, Switzerland
Councillors of the ESPN		
1967–1968	Niilo Hallman	Finland
	Jan Winberg	Sweden
1967–1969	Emile Gautier	Switzerland
	Horst Bickel	Germany
1967–1970	Ferdinand Demant	Czechoslovakia
	Renee Habib	France
1968–1971	Nils Svenningsen	Sweden
	Marian Wojnarowski	Poland
1969–1972	Wolfgang Hagge	Germany
	Richard H.R. White	England
1970–1973	Peter Grossmann	Germany
	Pierre Royer	France
1971–1974	Gavin C. Arneil	Scotland
	Niilo Hallman	Finland
1972–1975	Karel Van Acker	Belgium
	Sheamus Dundon	Ireland
1973–1976	Mikhail Matveyev	USSR
	Michel Broyer	France

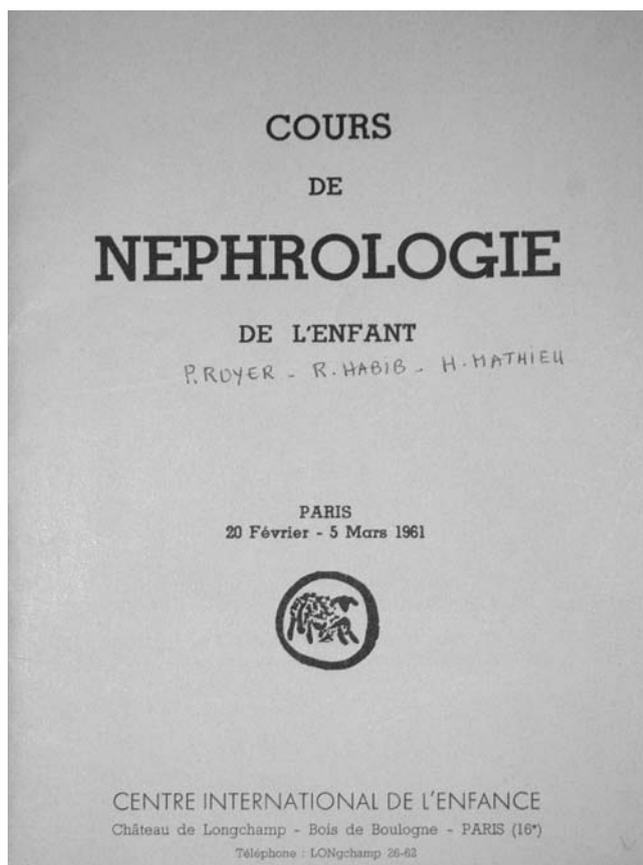


Fig. 12 Announcement of the first European course in pediatric nephrology in 1961 in Paris attended by pediatricians from 22 countries

seminar and a founding member of the European Society of Paediatric Research, Niilo Hallman was well aware of the advantages of international contacts. The invitation by Gavin Arneil and Harmen Tiddens to meet in Glasgow was therefore immediately accepted, as was their proposal that he act as one of the first ESPN council members, together with his good friend Jan Winberg from Sweden, who was one of the first successfully to study the epidemiology of urinary tract infections in children.

The third meeting of the ESPN took place in Helsinki in 1969 under Niilo's presidency, and, in 1977, he hosted the fourth IPNA meeting in Helsinki. Although Niilo Hallman occupied the Chair of pediatrics in Helsinki until 1987, it took many years before the first Chair of pediatric nephrology was created in Finland.

Cooperative achievements (by G.A. and J.H.H.E.)

Early cooperative clinical research studies performed by members of the ESPN concerned renal venous thrombosis [21], hemolytic–uremic syndrome, familial nephrotic syndrome [22], thromboembolic complications of nephrotic

syndrome and the incidence of chronic renal failure [23]. A workshop on “Psychological aspects of haemodialysis in children” was organized by Ginette Raimbault [24] in 1972 in Paris, where ten psychologists attached to pediatric dialysis and transplantation units discussed psychosocial criteria for the success of renal replacement (ESPN Newsletter no. 3, 1972). Supported by ESPN members, this group of psychologists, social workers and teachers has met annually ever since, to discuss psychosocial problems ensuing from long-term renal replacement therapy (<http://www.ewopa-renalchild.com>).

Since 1971, one member, and since 1976, two ESPN members, have regularly served on the Registration Committee of the European Dialysis and Transplant Association (EDTA) collecting the data of European children on renal replacement therapy through different questionnaires. The results have been documented in more than 50 articles and were summarized by the members of the Registration Committee for the first 20 years [25].

Perhaps the highest compliment paid to the ESPN was the request to Gavin Arneil to found the IPNA along similar

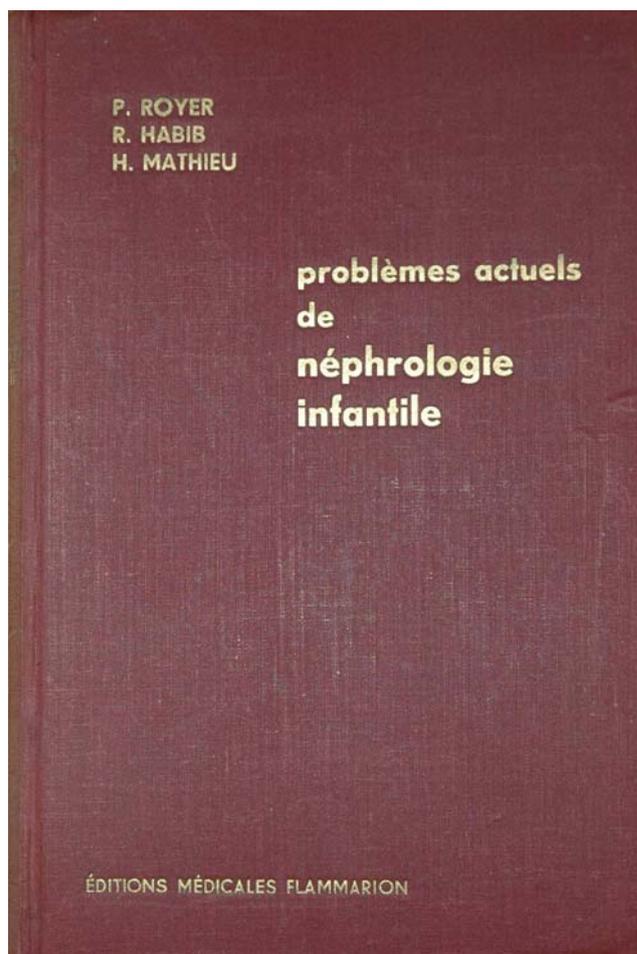


Fig. 13 The first textbook of pediatric nephrology in Europe published in 1963 at Flammarion, Paris

lines to those of the ESPN, in 1974. He remained as Secretary General of IPNA for 9 years and was followed by Ira Greifer from USA and later by Matthias Brandis from Germany. The “offspring”, the IPNA, has proved to be a great success, publishing the international journal *Pediatric Nephrology* since 1987. Apparently earlier attempts to document research specifically in the field of pediatric nephrology, such as the *International Journal of Pediatric Nephrology* (1980–1987) were less successful in the long-run. The IPNA also assisted the creation of other regional societies in Latin America, Asia, Australia, Japan and Africa, and supported the organization of teaching courses in developing countries.

Conclusions

The founding of the ESPN was probably the first successful model for a unification of all Europeans, 30 years before this started on a wider and political level. The pioneers of pediatric nephrology in Europe formed a group of very active, communicative and creative pediatricians, opening a new chapter not only in pediatrics. Several members of the ESPN opened the door for the East European pediatricians to join with their colleagues in the West. Therefore, the pioneers of European pediatric nephrology can also be regarded as political pioneers. ESPN members built strong links with other societies, such as the European Society for Paediatric Research or the Working Group on Mineral Metabolism, leading joint congresses (e.g., Lausanne 1974) involving other pediatric subspecialists or adult nephrologists.

Forty years after its foundation, the ESPN is a lively and widely accepted pediatric specialty society. The success of the ESPN is, however, not only due to the initiative of the few pioneers.

The two founders, Gavin Arneil and Harmen Tiddens, are the first to say that many pediatricians have contributed to this success story in the early and later stages of its growth and development, but that is another story...

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