

## AOGS ACTA HISTORY

# The history of NFOG and *Acta Obstetrica et Gynecologica Scandinavica* 1921–2011

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## NFOG and *Acta Obstetrica et Gynecologica Scandinavica*

A key event in the history of collaboration between the professional societies in the Nordic countries, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, occurred in 1990 when the then existing Nordic organization was transformed from an association based on the individual membership of some hundreds of obstetricians and gynecologists in the Nordic countries into a federation where each of the five national societies was itself a member. This membership was automatically extended to include every obstetrician and gynecologist in the Nordic countries. The Nordic societies together represented more than 4000 obstetricians and gynecologists who were now not only members of a national society, and before this perhaps also individually members of the Nordic organization (variously called federation or association), but of a much more substantial and formal Nordic Federation of Societies of Obstetrics and Gynecology (NFOG). This provided a new framework for collaboration at a regional and international level.

In this article the NFOG, its background, and the reasons for and consequences of this organizational metamorphosis will be described. But before doing so, the earlier history of NFOG will be put into the perspective of the Federation's long existence and that of its professional scientific journal, *Acta Obstetrica et Gynecologica Scandinavica* (AOGS), from 1920 until the present time. Initially, the organization appears to have been mainly concerned with publication of the journal. Regular meetings or conferences/congresses at 2-yearly intervals where obstetricians and gynecologists from the Scandinavian countries could interact were started after 1930. Gradually, through the first 40 years, this co-operation was strengthened, interrupted by the Second World War, until by 1990 the need for a much improved new organization was evident.

## NFOG and AOGS: an interwoven track from 1921 to 1990

From the early 1920s Nordic gynecologists began gradually to have more formal contact in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden and in the proceedings from such a meeting in Stockholm on 22 October 1920 the organization was presented as the "Obstetric and Gynaecologic Section." At that time, several Nordic medical specialty "sections" had started to publish their proceedings in journals named *Acta*, for example *Acta Otolaryngica* and *Acta Psychiatrica*, to allow easier publication of material from within the specialty at a mainly Nordic, but also to some extent an international, level. The "Obstetric and Gynaecologic Section" started its journal in 1921, with a combined 1921–1922 printed issue appearing in 1922. The journal was initially named *Acta Gynecologica Scandinavica*, but in 1926 the name was changed to AOGS to reflect both arms of the specialty.

The early key members or officers of the "section" representing an association of Nordic gynecologists are difficult to identify. The persons who were active in upholding meetings and related activities at that time have now long since passed away. Only very limited information, documents or protocols from meetings or other activities, lists of members or reports of a constitution and by-laws have been identified. Research in Nordic libraries and among now living members of the organization as it was until 1990, has failed to provide substantial additional information. Individual society records are variably preserved, but do not contain significant mention in relation to Nordic formal collaboration. However, there is information to be found in the preserved issues of the journal, now abbreviated AOGS, both providing names of persons who were scientifically active at that time and giving details of their scientific interests, as well as some indirect information on how the Nordic collaboration developed. Hence, the proceedings of the "Nordic obstet-

rics and gynaecologic congress” in 1920 appeared with abstracts in the first issue of AOGS in 1921. There, Dr. Gunnar Holmberg had lectured on “Psychic disturbances in connection with pregnancy and parturition,” Prof. John Hjalmar Forssner in Stockholm had presented “Two cases of uterine tuberculosis,” Prof. Erik Ahlström “A case of mesenterial sarcoma,” Dr. Sten Hasselroth “A case of ruptura uteri intra gravitatem” and Dr Per Wetterdahl “A case of bilateral extra uterine pregnancy.” In this very first issue of *Acta Gynecologica Scandinavica* the Editorial Board consisted of the main editor, Prof. John Hjalmar Forssner, and professors Kristian Brandt of Christiania (now Oslo) Norway, Svend Aage Gammeltoft of Copenhagen, Denmark and Walter Wegelius from Helsinki, Finland. This Editorial Board served until 1926, when the name of the journal was changed to its present AOGS. The Editorial Board members were named “collaborantes,” which would today encompass the reviewers and/or “associate editors.” In 1929 Prof. Anton Sunde from Oslo replaced Prof. Brandt.

Already from the start of *Acta Gynecologica Scandinavica* in 1921, it was decided that scientific articles should be published in German, French or English. Nordic languages were only accepted in advertisements, which anyway did not start to appear until 30 years later. In the very first issue of *Acta Gynecologica Scandinavica* for 1921–1922 seven articles were in English, two in German and two in French (Table 1). Over the years English came to be the predominating language (American English) and the last article in French appeared in 1948 (Gustav T. Hedberg: “La cystite du trigone chez la femme”), while German prevailed until 1972 (a supplement with four articles by Fritz Bartsch on “Fetale erythrozyten im Mütterlichen Blut”). Linguistic abilities of Nordic authors and readers up to that time were ostensibly good. Although no Chief Editor was designated, John Hjalmar Forssner acted in this capacity in effect (Figure 1; Data S1).

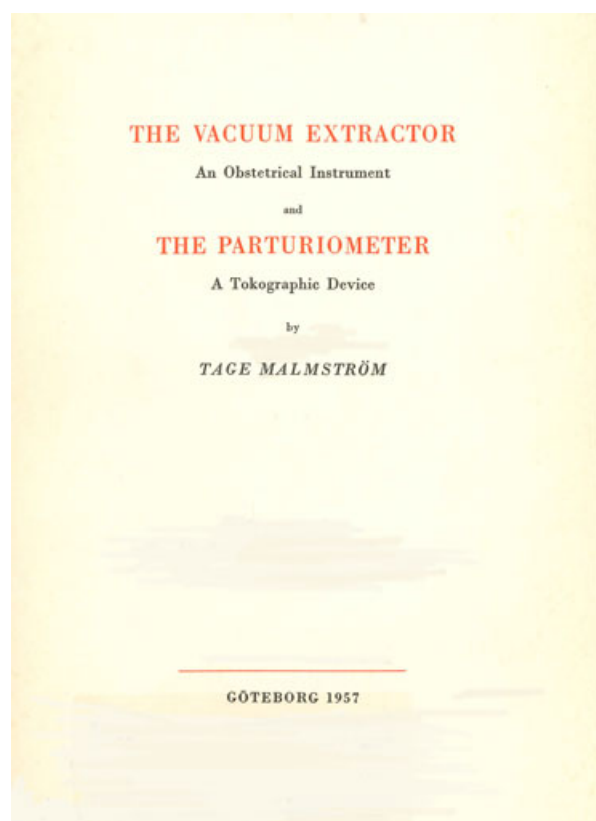
**Table 1.** Contents of the first issue of *Acta Obstetrica et Gynecologica Scandinavica* (volume 1, issue 1, pages 1–136).

M. Elis Essen-Möller. <i>Quelque remarques sur le traitement de la placenta praevia</i> (pp. 1–9)
Chr. Lange-Nielsen. <i>Ein neues Verfahren für des Anlegen des forderen Zangenlöffels bei “Querstand”</i> (pp. 10–15)
A. Sunde. <i>Chorioepithelioma malignum: Clinical and Pathological Studies. With a contribution towards illuminating the transition of hydatid mole to Chorioepithelioma</i> (pp. 16–60)
H.J. Forssner. <i>Die Ausforeitung der Urniere mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die Genese der v. Recklings-hausen’schen Geschwülste</i> (pp. 61–103)
P. Ernst and S.A. Gammeltoft. <i>Two cases of Fibromyoma with intra-abdominal hemorrhage</i> (pp. 104–26)
Proceedings of the Obstetric-Gynaecological Section in Stockholm 1920–1921: Meeting on October 22nd 1921 (pp. 127–36):
G Holmberg: <i>On psychic disturbances in connection with pregnancy and parturition</i>
J.H. Forssner: <i>Two cases of uterine tuberculosis</i>
E. Ahlström: <i>A case of mesenterial sarcoma</i>
S. Hasselroth: <i>A case of ruptura uteri intra gravitatem</i>
P. Wetterdahl: <i>A case of bilateral extra-uterine pregnancy</i>

Many of the early volumes of AOGS were large monographs, i.e. long treatises or theses on one specific subject. This pattern continued largely until about 1945, when the character of publications started to change to contain more regular volumes consisting of shorter articles akin to modern scientific writing. This demanded a gradual increase of the number of “collaborantes.” From the 1930s, supplements on specific issues also became frequent. An example was the 1937 League of Nations Health Organization’s *Annual Report* on “Results of radiotherapy in cancer of the uterine cervix” presented by James Heyman of Stockholm, who was the second Chief Editor of “Acta” as the journal was and is still often called (Figure 1). This supplement had a wide influence. By 1940 there were 35 “collaborantes” and in the same year



**Figure 1.** Chief Editors of AOGS 1921–1977. From left to right: John Hjalmar Forssner 1920–1924, James Heyman 1925–1948, Axel Westman 1949–1960, Alf Sjövall 1961–1970, Axel Ingelman-Sundberg 1971–1977.



**Figure 2.** Acta supplement from 1957: Dr. Tage Malmström's thesis on the vacuum extractor.

the first supplement in English was published by Miriam Furuhielm of Stockholm "On the excretion of oestrogenic and androgenic substances in the uterus of women." This was the second female author in the journal – the first was Ellen Vibeke Jensen in Copenhagen who in 1922 published on "A case of bleeding from the bladder during labour." Another well known supplement somewhat later, published in 1954, was that of Tage Malmström on "Vacuum Extractor – an obstetrical instrument" (Figure 2). This article launched the scientific basis of the vacuum extraction or ventouse technique on the international scene.

In 1950–1951 there were 48 "collaborantes" presented. The original Editorial Boards usually stayed on with little change for more than 10 years for each person during the first three decades of AOGS. In 1955 the first "List of Referees" (peer reviewers) was published.

The journal was first printed by the firm Mercators tryckeri (Mercator printers) in Helsinki, and was published by the "Northern Association of obstetricians and gynecologists," a name kept alive for the federation in some way until 1990. In 1950 the publisher Esselte in Stockholm took over the production of the journal, but it was printed by the printing firm Håkan Ohlssons Boktryckeri

**Table 2.** Chief Editors and Publishers of *Acta Obstetricia et Gynecologica Scandinavica* 1921–2013.

<b>Chief Editors</b> (see also Data S1)	
1921–1924	John Hjalmar Forssner, Stockholm
1925–1948	James Heyman, Stockholm
1949–1960	Axel Westman, Stockholm
1961–1970	Alf Sjövall, Lund
1970–1977	Axel Ingelman-Sundberg, Stockholm
1978–1990	Ingemar Joelsson, Umeå
1990–1993	Per Bergsjö, Bergen
1994–1999	Wiggo Fischer-Rasmussen, Copenhagen
1999–2000	Lars Hamberger, Gothenburg
2000–2007	Per Olof Janson, Gothenburg
2007–	Reynir Tómas Geirsson, Reykjavik
<b>Publishers</b>	
<i>Local contractors for the owner or the Chief Editor, on behalf of the Nordic Association:</i>	
Stockholm 1921–1961; 1970–1977; 1989–1990	
Lund 1961–1970	
Umeå 1977–1989	
<i>Professional publishers:</i>	
Almqvist & Wiksell International, Stockholm, 1990–1991	
Scandinavian University Press, Stockholm and Oslo 1991	
Munksgaard, Copenhagen, 1992–2000	
Blackwell Munksgaard, Copenhagen and Oxford, 2001–2006	
Taylor & Francis, Stockholm, Oslo and Oxford, 2006–2007	
Informa Healthcare, Stockholm and Oxford, 2007–2010	
Wiley Blackwell Copenhagen and Oxford, 2011–	

(Berlingske Boktryckeri) in Lund, Sweden, which produced the regular issues, while supplements could be printed in different locations, such as Oslo, Lund or Helsinki (Table 2).

After 1950, Prof. Axel Westman in Stockholm had assumed the honorary post of Chief Editor (Figure 1) and on the inside cover of an issue in 1954 the AOGS was presented by the following text:

The AOGS are published as a medium for the presentation of clinical and experimental work done in the Scandinavian countries in the field of obstetrics and gynecology and for the dissemination of the result in medical literature. The AOGS contain original articles which appear in English, French, German according to the authors' wish. Every paper is accompanied by the authors' summary in English. Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden are represented in the Editorial Board and the Chief Editor is currently from Sweden. This cooperation of the Scandinavian countries provides the readers with the complete survey of the results achieved in these countries in the field of obstetrics and gynecology.

In 1960 the Swedish professor Alf Sjövall of Lund succeeded as Chief Editor for the next 10 years after which his successor Axel Ingelman-Sundberg took over (Figure 1). These two men, and not least the latter, can be credited

with steadily increasing the “internationalization” of the journal. The Chief Editors are listed in Table 2.

AOGS was published every year from 1921 onwards, with the exception of 1944, when the war prevented printing. After the Second World War the publication of AOGS was regular and became ever more frequent with planned bimonthly issues until 1990 and thereafter monthly issues. The association fielded two-yearly congresses between 1933 and 1939, and again as of the beginning of 1950s (Table 3). Apart from the Nordic congresses and the publication of the journal, the Northern Association was, however, not organized around other activities to any great degree. It must be kept in mind that Nordic obstetricians and gynecologists were few and even in the 1930s their number in Sweden was less than 50, which limited the scope for activities at an international level. Separate Nordic efforts did nonetheless gain steadily in strength, such as within fertility and birth registration, where active collaboration was developed. By 1974 there was a “Nordisk Förening för Obstetrik och Gynekologi” (translated on its letter-heading as The Scandinavian Association of Obstetricians and Gynecologists) and there were moves towards collective membership fees and prenumeration to the journal. AOGS was now (1978–1990) under the Chief Editorship of Prof. Ingemar Joelsson in Umeå, Sweden, but the Nordic Association had little to do with the running of the journal except to mediate the appointment of national editors to the Editorial Board. The running of the journal with a falling impact, page charges and a substantial subscription cost, caused increasing concern within the association and a need to strengthen the Nordic collaboration became increasingly evident to many. In those deliberations the

running of the journal was a central issue. Plans were needed for a better and more durable structure for AOGS's editing and economy. The Nordic Association had also to get a different grounding through universally uniting all obstetricians and gynecologists in the five countries.

## Metamorphosis: events in 1989–1991

In 1989–1990, Prof. Berndt Kjessler in Linköping (Figure 3) Sweden had, from his position as former chairman of the Swedish association (SFOG) taken an active part in the preparation of the transition of NFOG from an association based on individual membership affiliations into a federation of the by now five Nordic national societies of obstetricians and gynecologists. Together with Dr. Mette Haase Moen in Norway (Figure 4) and Dr. Per Olof Janson in Sweden, he formed an interim working party called the Council of Nordic Gynecologists (Nordiska Gynekologrådet, NOGYR). During the last years of the 1980s, NFOG faced a troublesome economic situation, which was reflected in serious delays in the production of AOGS and economic irregularities were suspected in the running of the journal. In 1989 only one issue of AOGS was produced of the six to eight issues planned. It was realized that extensive reform was also necessary to maintain the journal, to solve NFOG's economic crisis and to change the situation around the journal. The journal had been published in Umeå in northern Sweden by a small printing press partly owned by the Chief Editor, who also ran other personal ventures used to handle aspects of the publishing in a way that left minimal revenues for NFOG.

**Table 3.** The Nordic Congresses 1980–2012.<sup>a</sup>

22nd 1980	Gothenburg
23rd 1982	Helsinki
24th 1984	Odense
25th 1986	Malmö/Lund
26th 1988	Trondheim
27th 1990	Uppsala
28th 1992	Reykjavik
29th 1994	Oulu
30th 1996	Stockholm
31st 1998	Aarhus
32nd 2000	Oslo
33rd 2002	Umeå
34th 2004	Helsinki
35th 2006	Gothenburg
36th 2008	Reykjavik
37th 2010	Copenhagen
38th 2012	Bergen
39th 2014	Stockholm

<sup>a</sup>Earlier congresses incompletely tabulated, awaits further research.



**Figure 3.** Professor Berndt Kjessler, Linköping, Sweden.



NFOG itself had set up a reform committee and this, together with the AOGS Editorial Board, met with the NOGYR working party. The aim was to offer Nordic obstetricians and gynecologists an educational package involving membership of NFOG as well as obligatory subscription to the journal at a very reasonable price to serve as a basis of future activities and at the same time reorganize and secure funding for a new federation structure. The publisher and Chief Editor were changed and the former moved to the professional publishing firm Almqvist & Wiksell (later Scandinavian University Press) in Stockholm. Prof. Per Bergsjö from Bergen in Norway became the new Chief Editor.

The general assemblies of the national societies all agreed to these propositions. The documentation created by the NOGYR committee created a background for the new NFOG organization, which was approved at a general assembly on 14 June 1990 at an NFOG congress in Uppsala, Sweden. A new organization was launched. NFOG now had a written and clear constitution and by-laws to regulate the congress, contingents, committees and matters concerning AOGS, the old association journal. Only minor revisions to these regulations have been needed since then. The first president of the new organization was Berndt Kjessler, who with foresightedness, enthusiasm and administrative skills guided NFOG through this time of change and the next 4 years.

After negotiations in the early part of 1991, NFOG decided to change publisher again – this time to the international firm Munksgaard in Copenhagen, Denmark. All obstetricians and gynecologists were to be members of the respective national associations in the five Nordic

countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden) and would now receive AOGS as part of the membership fee. This reduced the actual subscription costs to five to six times less than the previous subscription fees. NFOG was made the formal owner of AOGS, which previously had been kept separate from the NFOG budget. In this way the journal was able to help create capital for NFOG, which with wise investing would give the organization considerable strength to further educational and other activities for improving obstetrics, gynecology and women's health in the Nordic countries.

## The NFOG Bulletin

As part of the transition and to further inter-Nordic cohesiveness, a newsletter called *NFOG Bulletinen* was started (Figure 5). The *Bulletin* was written in Scandinavian languages, with the possibility of using English if required. For the year 1991 two issues of the *Bulletin* were



Figure 4. Professor Mette Haase Moen, Trondheim, Norway.

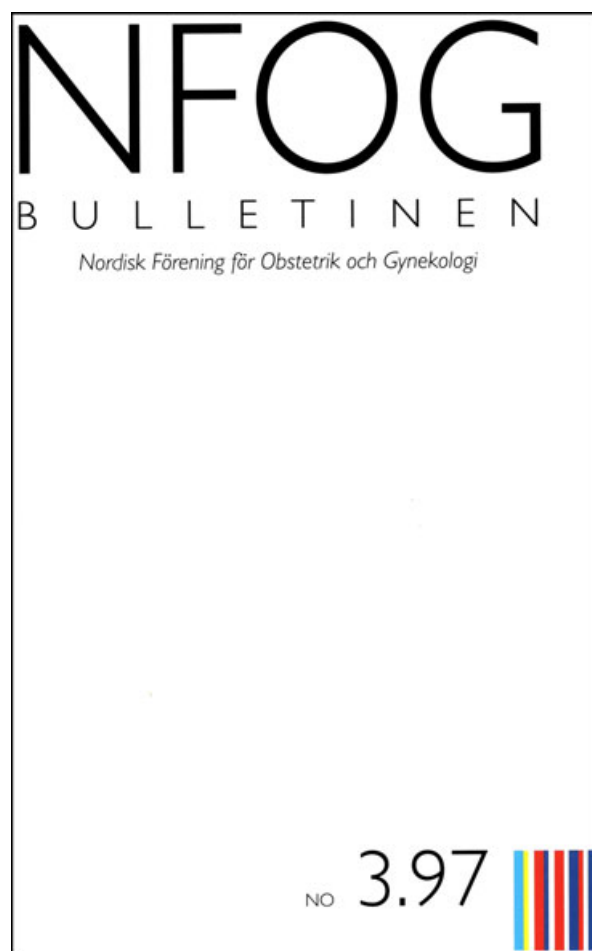


Figure 5. An issue of the *NFOG Bulletinen* from 1997.

**Table 4.** Presidents, general secretaries and treasurers of NFOG 1990–2012.

President: Berndt Kjessler, Sweden 1990–1994
Secretary General: Kari Termo, Finland
Treasurer: John Philip, Denmark
President: Per Olof Janson, Sweden 1994–1998
Secretary General: Mette Haase Moen
Treasurer: Dag Wide Svensson, Sweden
President: Unni Kirste, Norway 1998–2002
Secretary General: Viveca Odling, Sweden
Treasurer: Nils-Erik Backas, Finland
President: Peter Hornnes, Denmark 2002–2006
Secretary General: Satu Suhonen, Finland
Treasurer: Kim Toftager Larsen, Denmark
President: Seija Grénman, Finland, 2006–2010
Secretary General: Ragnheidur I. Bjarnadóttir, Iceland
Treasurer: Martin Stjernquist, Sweden and Thea Lausen, Denmark (from 2008)
President: Göran Berg, Sweden, 2010–
Secretary General: Tone Skeie-Jensen, Norway
Treasurer: Thea Lausen, Denmark

planned after which the number of yearly issues was four. The *Bulletin* had a message from the president and reports from two standing working parties, the scientific and professional committees. This provided much needed reminders of the scientific, educational and professional situation and achievements in the Nordic countries. In the first issue of the *Bulletin*, the NFOG Board was presented: Berndt Kjessler, Sweden, was president, Kari Tera-mo, Finland, was general secretary, and John Philip, of Denmark acted as treasurer. Subsequent leading persons are named in Table 4. In addition, the chairmen of the five national societies were part of the board, i.e. Johannes Bock, Denmark, Olavi Ylikorkala, Finland, Jón Alfrédsson, Iceland, Fridtjof Jerve, Norway and Per Olof Janson, Sweden, and this has been continued. Per Bergsjö, Norway, was Chief Editor for AOGS and the president for the upcoming NFOG congress in Reykjavik in 1992 was Reynir T. Geirsson. The first editor for the *Bulletin* was Bo Lindberg, Sweden. They were associate members without voting rights on the board.

The *NFOG Bulletin* was appreciated by Nordic gynecologists and obstetricians and provided useful information on the main events within the federation. The next editor of the *Bulletin* was Kristina Hernborg-Johannessen, a Swedish-born gynecologist in Bergen, Norway (Figure 6). She enriched the *Bulletin* with reports from various meetings on education and professional policies, and with rich and reader-friendly photo documentation. The *Bulletin* also published two useful supplements, one on laboratory activities in reproductive medicine (Fig-

**Figure 6.** Dr Kristina Hernborg-Johannessen, Bergen, Norway.

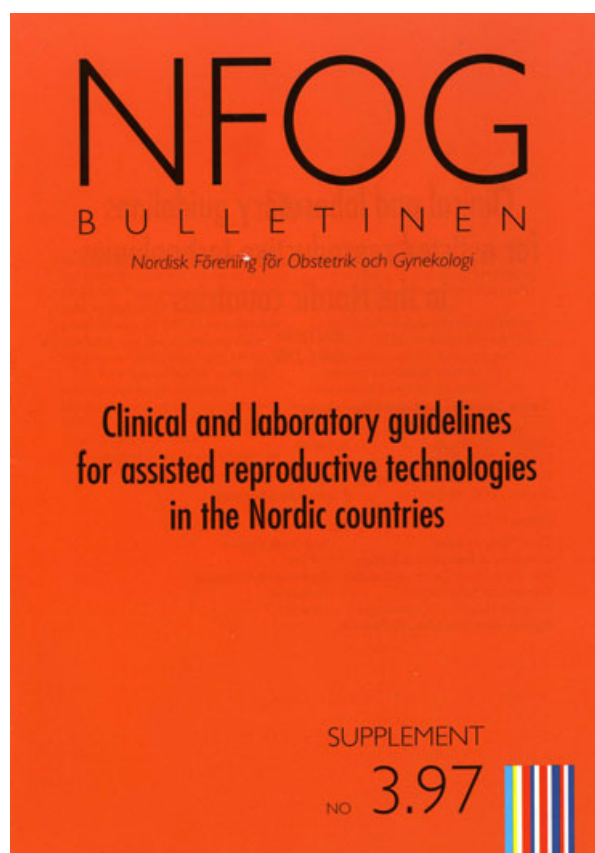
ure 7) and one on endoscopic surgery. Aksel Lange of Denmark continued the editorial tradition from 2002 and produced several attractive issues of the *Bulletin* until it was decided in 2005 to replace the *Bulletin* with the newly started NFOG website ([www.nfog.org](http://www.nfog.org)) under the guidance of the first webmaster of the Federation, Søren Brostrøm from Denmark, who was succeeded by his countryman, Peter Secher.

## The NFOG committees

The NFOG Educational Committee aimed already in 1991 to disseminate information on potential courses in the five countries at both a trainee and continuing medical education level; altogether 25 courses were advertised, mostly in Sweden but with free access for other Nordic participants. There was soon a need for courses to be held in English and one course was held jointly with the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) in the UK. Another course in bioethics for a mixed audience was arranged in Norway as early as 1991.

The NFOG Scientific Committee was chaired by Britth-Marie Landgren of Sweden. The work included results from an inquiry on topics appropriate for Nordic multi-center studies and for NFOG to act as a potential economic sponsor for such studies.

The NFOG Professional Committee chaired by Risto Erkkola, Finland, reported on issues such as the possible influence of national societies on professional matters and the advantages and disadvantages of harmonizing legislation between different Nordic countries, on collaboration and responsibilities of different professional groups



**Figure 7.** A supplement of the *NFOG Bulletin* from 1997: *Clinical and laboratory guidelines for assisted reproductive technologies in the Nordic countries*.

of healthcare workers, environmental problems, economical questions, on-call work, working hours, private practice and hospital work, gender distribution in the specialty and possible problems connected to professional activities within the European Union. This helped to shape views in the Nordic countries.

### Organization of NFOG from 1990 to 1991 until the present

The constitutional by-laws and specific enactments have, over the past 20 years, been adhered to and have only been subject to minor revision. The new Federation provided AOGS with an improved structure for choosing a Chief Editor and Editorial Board, made the journal accessible and cheap for all Nordic obstetricians and gynecologists, gave the board the possibility of overseeing editorial policy and economy of the journal and allowed revision of the Federation's constitution and by-laws. This improved international perspective of Nordic education and research, and stimulated integration of Nordic

research and teaching with trends seen elsewhere. Discussions on differences in Nordic legislation regarding health care proved opinion-forming and useful. The new organization facilitated a stable economy and provided a buffer against economic calamities, but it also made it possible to keep the individual membership fees at a reasonable level and the same for each member in all five countries. Within the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) the national societies have found increasing grounds for a common stance and collaboration. The same is true for the European Board and College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (EBCOG). NFOG acts as an umbrella for some other Nordic subspecialty organizations, such as in urogynecology, infertility and gynecologic oncology, but stronger ties to these subspecialty multi-professional societies are needed. Nordic obstetricians and gynecologists continue to be involved in many international societies as representatives for the region, often as key members and central to professional development.

NFOG is now the first international contact for the current 4500 obstetricians and gynecologists who are now active in the Nordic countries and it represents a population base of about 27 million. The population in all our five countries enjoy, in general, some of the highest standards of living found anywhere in the world, within a framework of an open, democratic, egalitarian and tolerant society. The Federation is based on the membership in one of the five Nordic societies, Dansk Selskab for Obstetrik og Gynecologi in Denmark, Finland's Gynecologiförening (Suomen Gynecologiyhdistys), Finland, Félæg Íslenskra Fæðinga- og Kvensjúkdómalækna in Iceland, Norsk Gynecologisk Forening in Norway and Svensk Förening för Obstetrik och Gynecologi in Sweden. The aim of NFOG is to create a forum for agreement between the five Nordic countries in matters dealing with scientific and professional activities among obstetricians and gynecologists, to support the development of the specialty by advancing training at different levels and to be a stalwart for promoting reproductive and women's health internationally.

AOGS publishes at present 12 issues each year. The impact factor has gone from 0.312 in 1989 to 1.850 in 2012. The Chief Editor is appointed by the NFOG board. Associate editors are nominated by the national societies and appointed by the NFOG board. The Chief Editor of AOGS and the president of the upcoming 2-yearly congresses take part in board meetings. NFOG has at present two standing committees on scientific and educational matters and several ad hoc committees. The chairpersons of the committees can be asked by the board to provide information at board meetings. Other persons who participate in the board meetings are the webmaster and the

chairperson of the Nordic Association of Obstetricians and Gynecologists in Training. Information to all Nordic gynecologists is given on the NFOG website ([www.nfog.org](http://www.nfog.org)). Although Danish, Swedish and Norwegian are similar languages, Finnish and Samic are not, and Icelandic and Faroese are sufficiently different as well. As a result, in 2003 it was decided that the language of NFOG should be English, which means that protocols and the entire documentation from the Federation are in English. This is also true for the NFOG congresses, which rotate every 2 years between the Nordic countries.

## Financial irregularities

The 1980s had seen the never fully investigated financial problems surrounding the publication of AOGS through the offices of the then Chief Editor. A review of 1 year, 1988, provided grounds to suspect that the journal costs had been inappropriately high in a way that might have yielded considerable profit that did not benefit the journal, NFOG or its members. Through an agreement with the Chief Editor, only minimal returns may have been apportioned to the society. After legal consultations, further investigations were refrained from in 1994. To add to this potentially large loss, after the 1990 change NFOG had collaborated closely with a Danish administrative firm in re-structuring the economy of NFOG. In April 1996 it was, however, discovered that NFOG's accounts during 1995 and 1996 showed a deficit of over one million Danish crowns. A newly employed assistant of the administrative firm had manipulated NFOG's bank accounts. A subsequent court case led to only a fraction of the funds being regained. This was another serious blow to NFOG. The consolation was that NFOG's economy was already quite solid in 1996 and that various activities of the Federation could proceed as planned. NFOG's economic management was again radically changed and similar calamities have since been avoided.

## NFOG fund

The general assembly of NFOG decided in June 2010 to establish the "NFOG Fund." According to special enactments the fund is open to applications from members of NFOG who are specialists in obstetrics and gynecology or have been trainees in obstetrics and gynecology for at least 2 years. Grants can be applied for twice a year and may be used for the (i) clinical or scientific visits outside the country of residence with the purpose of improving skills and/or developing and sharing expertise, (ii) voluntary or project work in developing countries, (iii) courses outside the country of residence, or (iv) collaborative

work regarding clinical or scientific topics or projects between members of the national societies of NFOG. Each national society can yearly apply for the coverage of expenses to bring one lecturer from another Nordic country to speak at the societies' annual meetings. This substantial fund has proved to be a major stimulus to the standing of NFOG among Nordic obstetricians and gynecologists.

## Conclusion

The NFOG metamorphosis of 1990 encompassed the transition from a society of professional companionship to a federation of the national societies of the Nordic countries. Its mainstays are the journal, AOGS, and the long-standing tradition of the successful Nordic congresses. The economy of the journal is now solid and it has a respected and firm status as an international publication medium in obstetrics, gynecology and reproductive health. It is foreseeable that the role for NFOG will grow to represent in effect our countries within international bodies such as FIGO and EBCOG and to provide a stimulus to harmonize education at a postgraduate and trainee level between the countries, so adding to the advantage of a long-standing easy flow of intellect and professional experience between the Nordic countries. More than 20 years have elapsed and it is fair to state that the metamorphosis of 1990 has worked well.

When one takes on the task of writing up a mini-history covering an époque of several decades, you find yourself in a state of bewildering time-travel, with quite a few people passing before your eyes. People that you knew or know very well and some that you have only read about or heard about. What has induced all these busy professional people to leave their daily jobs to volunteer for NFOG and form a complex international organization with a constitution and by-laws, committees, sub-committees, financial enactments and the running of an internationally acknowledged journal? Why have they pursued this work year after year? I think that the common denominator for all this is an awareness of the unstoppable educational development of our specialty! It has to do with our need for life-long learning. Being an obstetrician and a gynecologist is being a life-time trainee.

## Acknowledgments

After a meeting in Gothenburg 2008 with the Board of the Nordic Federation of Societies of Obstetrics and Gynecology (NFOG) the author was asked by Seija Grénman, at that time president of NFOG, about his



interest in describing some of the highlights of the Federation in *Acta Obstetricia et Gynecologica Scandinavica* in time for its 90-year anniversary in 2011. Why me? I asked, but at the same time I felt that this was an honorable task for a recently retired professor of obstetrics and gynecology and former president of NFOG and Chief Editor of the Federation's journal, *Acta Obstetricia et Gynecologica Scandinavica*. In a mood of conceitedness I accepted the challenge to do this work with the assistance for secretarial work and research assistance by the long time AOGS Editorial Manager, Eva Sterner, and with input from the present Chief Editor, Prof. Reynir T. Geirsson and Prof. Em. Berndt Kjessler. Of course much more has happened in 90 years, and so the present essay may be regarded as a "mini-history."

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## Supporting information

Additional Supporting Information may be found in the online version of this article:

**Data S1.** Information on the Chief Editors of *Acta Obstetricia et Gynecologica Scandinavica* from 1921 until the present.