

# Editorials

## Developing Mac Keith 'College'

*'I am not your boss. I am your colleague.'* Thus said Dr Ronald Mac Keith, founder of the Mac Keith Press and this journal, many years ago when I introduced him to my mother innocently saying: 'This is my boss.' My poor mother was startled by the intensity, almost anger, of his response to me before he turned politely enough to speak with her. But the message was clear. He didn't see the two of us as being in any way involved with business, politics, nor any institution nor any of those numerous human structures which involve one person telling another what to do. That was not the way to attack the fundamental task of understanding disability and seeing how to prevent, cure, treat, manage, and care for those biological conditions which could blight the lives, not only of the children who suffered from them, but those of their families as well. We were to be involved as colleagues in a collegiate activity and we had to bring within our ambit all those who could assist with this difficult, if not daunting, task. Mac Keith Press, Mac Keith Meetings, Mac Keith workshops, Mac Keith lectures – these have all been in pursuit of that collegiate plan.

Collegiate activity is carried on in a college which the lexicographer Dr Samuel Johnson defines as 'a society of men set apart by learning.' The largely parent group (then the Spastics Society, now Scope) who had asked for 'education and information' about their children were not going to get 'a medical model' (whatever that is), rather they were to get a tradition for biological investigation going back to Aristotle and earlier. Indeed it was Hippocrates who denied that epilepsy was due to the erotic behaviour of the gods, but to some disorder of the body which could be rationally investigated.

Such rational investigations required scientists from a wide range not only in basic sciences, but in sociology, psychology, statistics etc. Welcomed also to the college are the academic development of the therapies. There were no chairs in physiotherapy when the journal 'Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology' was started.

### The Collegiate Activity

*The Journal: Accuracy (scientific accuracy, the truth if you like), Clarity (can everybody understand it?), and Readability (do you actually want to go on turning the pages?). We have been blessed (and continue to be) with first class copy editors. Many people until they have had an article published have no idea how they contribute. They test every sentence for its accuracy, clarity, and readability. The journal has to look good, have a character and, unlike many scientific journals, not simply be a collection of papers.*

*The Books: keep them short. Ronnie Mac Keith wanted them summing up their subject comprehensively but tersely. I have let them get bigger, and once I let a book grow so big that it exceeded the bounds of four earlier clinics (Aicardi's Diseases of the Nervous System in Childhood – but who would be without it?).*

*The Meetings: small is beautiful. Twenty-five people get to know each other really well and argue a topic out. With 80 or 90 people for two days you just about get everybody's name*

*and pick out those you would like to talk to; bigger, and you become part of the audience – one of a crowd. Necessary activity because many want information/education but try always to break up into workshops for good mingling (I hate the word networking, it sounds like catching fish.)*

Scientists should know no national boundaries and the collegiate Mac Keith Press involves people from all over the world. In my view, one cannot stress enough the importance of this activity, not only in relation to its direct aim – the aiding of people with disability – but also in indicating to others in business and politics that cooperative activities with a common intellectual background can be effective across national boundaries when developed within a collegiate framework.

The 'college' is constantly being pressed to expand. People with disability and parents of children with disability want to know and understand the way in which the 'college' intends to investigate, understand, and help with these disabilities. But how to explain the statistical rationale behind a controlled study? This means a great expanding of teaching; handling issues around vocabulary; the lack for many of any basic biological education.

What Mac Keith emphasized about talking to parents and people with disabilities was an understanding of one's own personal position and feelings. 'Should you', he asked a large audience in New Orleans, 'cry with your patients?' The man next to me was visibly shocked at the suggestion. After a delicately calculated pause the lecturer continued, 'Well it is difficult for me, if I cry my glasses steam up and then I can't see'.

At the same time our knowledge base is rapidly expanding, but adding to, our dilemmas. Forty years ago there were the four main categories of disability: physical (motor) difficulties, learning difficulties (mental retardation), sensory problems, and behavioural disorders. These led to particular types of special schools. Now we have inclusion and we realize these different categories are often intimately mixed. New genetic diagnoses arrive every day, each one to be unraveled into its somatic/neurological/behavioural components so that management can be appropriate. All need prevention, treatment, management, and care. There is a lot to do.

Tim Liardet's protagonist in this poem (see page 849) is a man with cerebral palsy. He is looking for a cure:

*How could this shapeless big body,  
This slowness to follow  
And inner wildness in need of water ...*

From To the God of Rain

But the rain god fails him. Our earthly, temporal college at Mac Keith Press must do better!

Martin Bax

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## Evolution in a Journal

In the context of Mac Keith Press, we cannot write about Martin Bax without touching on some history. Fifty years ago interest in cerebral palsy (CP) was a minority concern and a sporadic one at that. The situation is now much different; special interest groups have formed linking a variety of specialities and sub-specialities, increasingly there are interdisciplinary research collaborations, and there are journals and other forms of publication devoted to developmental disabilities. Our journal began in 1958 when Ronnie Mac Keith, with the support of the Spastics Society (now Scope), founded the 'Cerebral Palsy Bulletin'. Around the same time he established and became director of the Medical Education and Information Unit. MEIU, as it was usually called, organized meetings the general purpose of which was to educate doctors and people from other disciplines about CP. Ronnie brought together people from a variety of backgrounds at his meetings. So long as they were interesting and had something relevant to say they were welcome. Many of these meetings formed the basis of a series of monographs initially published under the title, *Little Club Clinics in Developmental Medicine*, the first of which appeared in 1960. The name referred not to their size but to William John Little, a nineteenth century pioneer in the treatment of CP. By the time of his death Ronnie had overseen the production of around sixty-five *Clinics*

In 1962 the name 'Cerebral Palsy Bulletin' was changed to 'Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology' and publication increased from 4 to 6 issues per year. In the early 1960s Ronnie recruited Martin Bax as Assistant Editor of the journal. Martin was then a young doctor with an unusual collection of skills that Ronnie had need of. He was experienced in publishing (a literary magazine which, incidentally, still continues to appear) and he rapidly came to act as the publisher of 'Spastics International Medical Publications (SIMP)'.

In 1977 Ronnie Mac Keith died suddenly and in 1978 Martin took over as Senior Editor, responsible for bringing out 6 issues of the journal and 4 *Clinics* each year. Now, after 25 years as Senior Editor, Martin retires this month. During the quarter century of his stewardship much has changed in paediatric neurology, in our knowledge of child development, and in the care and management of sick children and those with disabilities. Much has changed too in the underlying basic science. In its own way our journal has made important contributions to these advances. The journal has also changed. In 1986 Martin steered through a significant name change: SIMP became Mac Keith Press (MKP). In 1990 publication was increased from 6 to 12 issues per year and in 1997 a larger format was adopted. These changes enabled the journal to publish more of the material that flowed in from around the world and, generally, to do so more rapidly.

In the rugged world of bibliometrics DMCN does very well.

In our specialist corner of paediatrics, where the journal is compared with others in its area, DMCN has for long been one of the leaders internationally. It does particularly well in terms of the half-life of the material published, in other words the importance of what we publish endures for longer. Among other things this is a reflection on the senior editor's judgement – knowing how to pick 'em. But perhaps the most telling evaluation was overheard by one of us at a meeting of the American Academy: 'It's a smart attractive journal and there is always something interesting in every issue'. Praise indeed in an age of hyper-specialization and a reflection on Martin's policy of maintaining the eclectic nature of the journal. While these developments were taking place with the journal the publication of the *Clinics* has continued under the amended title of *Clinics in Developmental Medicine*. The series deals with a wide variety of subjects and Martin has been responsible for overseeing more than 100 volumes, several of which he has edited himself.

The journal plays an important part in the affairs of a number of organizations. It is the official publication of the British Paediatric Neurology Association and for the American Academy for Cerebral Palsy and Developmental Medicine. The Press acts as publisher for the International Child Neurology Association and close and developing relationships exist with the European Academy of Childhood Disability. Martin has put great energy into maintaining and developing these international connections.

When at the behest of Scope the series of meetings originally organized by the MEIU were reintroduced as Mac Keith Meetings, Martin promptly took an active role in organizing meetings, devoted to a great range of topics with a bearing on disability, neuroscience, and developmental medicine. With the assistance of a meetings committee and the use of the facilities of the Royal Society of Medicine these meetings are flourishing.

Martin's personality as well as his 'know how' in publishing and his own research experience, provide an uncommon combination of qualities that MKP has greatly enjoyed and benefited from. In the 25 years that Martin has been Senior Editor the journal has prospered; it is significantly larger, it enjoys a high rate of submissions, and its standing in both the clinical and scientific worlds is high. The *Clinics*, now number more than 160, continue to deal with a wide range of subjects, and have one of the smartest liveries of any British publishing house. Thanks to Martin the future for the Press looks busy, there is much to do. We acknowledge his great contribution to Mac Keith Press and wish him a happy and entertaining retirement.

*Kevin Connolly & Lewis Rosenbloom*

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