

Jubilee talk SAGIM, Copenhagen Nov. 24th 2017.

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The idea first came up in 1986 when I met with Hasse Abrahamsson at a symposium in Skövde. We had a common idea; we wanted a forum where experts – and those interested in motility – could meet, exchange ideas, and network. At that time, the Nordic Gastroenterology meeting was divided into Gastro or Endoscopy – and this meant that the motility papers were dispersed.

In the autumn, I met Hasse again in Germany (Frankfurt), and meanwhile I had been in contact with JanssenPharma, a significant support were granted from JP, in Denmark – Ole Basbøll, and from the headquarters in Belgium (Andre Reyntjens, Jan Schuurkes and Marleen Verlinden). We therefore decided to get the idea airborne: We included Jon Haffner from Norway: an efficient organiser (later President in Norwegian Medical Association and Honorary Secretary General in The Nordic Surgical Society).

In January 1987, we met in Aarhus: We had a brainstorm, and made the statutes. The creation of bylaws was thus quite simple, once the purpose of the Society was established. We also decided on the name SAGIM (Scandinavian Association of GastroIntestinal Motility, today Neurogastroenterolgy and motility).

The interest for the project was very good – actually overwhelming - and the Society was formally founded at the 20th Nordic Meeting of Gastroenterology in Trondheim, June 1987. I was elected the first chairman, Hasse Abrahamsson Secretary, and Jon Haffner treasurer. Additionally Svend Arne Pedersen and Anna-Liisa Karvonen from Finland were elected to the Steering Committee. A competition for creation of logo was made, and Karsten Kraglund and Jens Henrik Nex won with the logo still valid today.

Already the same year we had the first scientific meeting at Soria Moria in Oslo 30-31 October. The meeting was a great success with more than 100 participants. (Gastrointestinal Motility Studies in Scandinavia. Proceedings from the First Scientific Meeting of SAGIM, Oslo 1987. Scand J Gastroenterol 1988;23, Suppl 152: 1-90.)

The focus of the meeting was presentations of what was already ongoing in the Nordic countries. The first honorary member who was elected: Robert C. Heading from Edinburgh gave a lecture. At the opening of the meeting I

described what Hasse, Jon, and I considered the background and aim of SAGIM, and I would like to quote from that opening talk:

“In recent years there has been an increasing interest in GI motility. New techniques have been introduced and a lot of work is going on in the Nordic countries. With the increasing interest and use of various methods, applied on clinical subgroups, and some methods are now in clinical routine. In order to gain a maximum yield from the various methods it is important to have exact definitions of what is actually measured. Furthermore, standardization of interpretation of recordings is important, and it is a mandatory demand in order to compare criterions that separate normality from abnormality. In order to meet these demands, it is necessary to have meetings where those working with motility can meet and discuss their results. With few exceptions, most motility papers are dispersed at various sessions of different GI congresses. In the Nordic countries, there is a long-standing tradition for intimate cooperation, including scientific meetings where results – even preliminary ones – are presented openly in a friendly atmosphere, and it is hoped that SAGIM will become an example of this.

The general objective of SAGIM is to increase the knowledge of motility; to increase the knowledge and use of various methods; to promote diagnosis and treatment of GI motor disease; and to bring about contact between GI motility milieus in and outside the Nordic countries.”

At the conclusion of the meeting it was decided to establish six working teams who should work on standardization of motility investigations. The teams comprised: oesophageal, gastric, biliary, small intestinal, colonic, and ano-rectal motility. (oesophagus: Lene Wallin, Knut Nygaard and Kjeld Thor; gastric: Erik Øster-Jørgensen, Tom Gerner, Svend Arne Pedersen and Per Hellström; biliary: PFJ and Joar Svanvik; small intestine: Per Hellström, Einar Husebye and Karsten Kraglund; colonic: Svante Nordgren and Hasse Abrahamsson; ano-rectal: John Christiansen, Michael Sørensen, Ole Øther Rasmussen, Ragnhild Emblem, and Rune Sjødahl).

The Second SAGIM meeting was held in Gothenburg 17-18 November 1989 with 64 participants. The working teams presented the results of their work, which was then discussed – later it was finalised and published in European Journal of Surgery. (Methods for studying gastrointestinal motility. Consensus reports from working teams organised by Scandinavian Association for Gastrointestinal Motility. Eur J Surg 1990. Suppl 564.)

Later SAGIM had meetings every other year. We managed to get included in the Nordic Meeting of Gastroenterology, but these meetings stopped after the meeting in Iceland in 2004. It is very gratifying today to see that SAGIM has survived nevertheless.

Before I close I should point at Jon Haffners idea – and great work - in collecting all Nordic dissertations in the motility area. The first summary of dissertations was published in 1990, later Lene Wallin complemented it and in 1995 it comprised 93 doctoral dissertations.

Did SAGIM make a difference?

I believe we did. Motility was already quite strong in the Nordic countries, but discussions and new collaborations can at least partly be credited SAGIM. In the jubilee issue of SJG from 2015, Hans Tørnblom, Magnus Simren, and Hasse Abrahamsson write: “The founding of SAGIM in 1987 has stimulated contacts, exchange of ideas and joint research projects.”

So SAGIM did make a difference!