

EDITORIAL

THE 100TH BIRTHDAY OF ROBIN FÅHRÆUS

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This issue honors Robin Fåhræus on the occasion of his 100th birthday on 15 October 1988. Siegfried Witte and I are very glad to have in this issue a brief biography of Robin Fåhræus by Patrick Sourander and Lars H. Breimer. Professor Sourander, Emeritus Professor of Pathology at the University of Göteborg, Sweden, graciously accepted our invitation to honor Robin Fåhræus in this way. He is joined by the Swedish biomedical scientist Lars H. Breimer, presently at Chester Beatty Laboratories, Institute of Cancer Research, London, England. Dr. Breimer shares Professor Sourander's deep interest in the history of medicine. Patrick Sourander is a leading neuropathologist and was in 1966 a founding member of the International Society of Neuropathology, and President of the X. International Congress of Neuropathology, held in Stockholm in 1986. Both authors are Fellows of the Linnean Society, London. At present, Professor Sourander is engaged in writing a biography of Robin Fåhræus, in whose Department of Pathology at the University of Uppsala he was a lecturer in Pathology from 1953 to 1957 and became his friend.

It is highly appreciated by many of our Readers that Robin Fåhræus has been a Founder of modern clinical hemorheology. Moreover, he is highly esteemed as an innovator in experimental hemorheology. In both experimental and clinical hemorheology Robin Fåhræus had been a pioneer long before biorheology with its different fields became an organized science.

During the Third International Congress on Rheology, held in 1958 in Bad Oeynhausen, F.R. Germany, Robin Fähræus, George W. Scott Blair, myself and other participants founded a skeleton organization to investigate the possibilities of initiating an International Society of Biorheology. However, we considered it premature at that time to establish such a Society.

Robin Fähræus was one of the Editors of the new journal BIORHEOLOGY since its initiation in 1959 by Mr. Robert Maxwell, President of Pergamon Press. Four years later, he participated in the 'Symposium on Biorheology', which was held as part of the Fourth International Congress on Rheology at Brown University in Providence, RI, USA. The frontispiece of the volume, containing the Proceedings of the Symposium on biorheology, shows a portrait photograph of Robin Fähræus, to whom this book was dedicated. This dedication has below PROFESSOR ROBIN FÄHRÆUS the epithet 'Pioneer and Nestor of Contemporary Hemorheology'. When this dedication was announced in my Opening Address of the Symposium, its participants gave a standing ovation to Robin Fähræus, who accepted the honor bestowed on him.

In 1966, the First International Conference on Hemorheology was held at the University of Iceland, Reykjavik, when the International Society of Hemorheology was founded. Robin Fähræus was honored by the Society during this Conference in becoming the first Awardee of the Poiseuille Gold Medal. It honors both the recipient and Jean-Léonard-Marie Poiseuille, who lived in Paris from 1799-1869. He is considered as a pioneer of experimental hemorheology. His studies concerned the microcirculation and its relation to the wall of capillary blood vessels.

The Poiseuille Gold Medal Award has since been awarded by the Society to prominent biorheologists at each of its subsequent congresses, held usually every three years. During its Second International Conference at Heidelberg University in 1969, the Society was expanded to include all fields of biorheology and renamed the International Society of Biorheology. It became during the same year An Affiliated Commission of the International Union of Pure and Applied Biophysics.

During the past decades investigators of blood clotting in health and disease have rather ignored the highly significant findings by Fåhræus. These findings concern the reversible aggregation of erythrocytes, with concomitant increase in concentration of fibrinogen and other plasma proteins in the circulation. Needed experimental studies in animals and investigations in apparently healthy human subjects will have to be extended further to include pathological conditions such as, among others, inflammation, polycythemia, pre-eclampsia and thrombo-embolization in which erythrocyte aggregation is involved.

The importance of the pioneering studies by Robin Fåhræus was also recognized by the European Conference on Clinical Hemorheology during its Second Conference, organized under the auspices of the Royal Society of Medicine, London, in 1981, by the establishment of the Robin Fåhræus Medal Award. It has been bestowed to a leading clinical hemorheologist during subsequent European Conferences every two years.

It was a particular pleasure for me, when I was asked by the European Conference to design, in my other activity as an artist, both sides of the Robin Fåhræus Medal. The front side bears a portrait of Robin Fåhræus. A reproduction of the original drawing of the portrait used for the Medal is given as the frontispiece of this Robin Fåhræus Memorial Issue.

The Swedish Society of Pathology has kindly invited me to deliver the Robin Fåhræus Memorial Lecture at their Annual Meeting on 1 December 1988 in association with the Annual Assembly of Swedish Physicians, called Riksstämman (National Assembly), in Stockholm. It is truly meaningful to me to be asked by the venerable Swedish Society of Pathology to give the Robin Fåhræus Memorial Lecture in honor of my dear late friend.