

THE HISTORY OF THE SIU

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SIU President 2006-2007

The second half of the 19th century was a time of revolution for surgery, during which many new medical specialties emerged, including urology. Our speciality was developed by surgeons to treat genito-urinary diseases surgically, while remaining receptive to the knowledge and techniques imparted by other disciplines.

In 1907, a number of urological associations and national urological societies were either already in existence or in the process of being created. The American Association for Genito-Urinary surgeons had been created by Edward J. Keyes Sr. in 1888. Many national societies who adopted the term “Urology” in their appellation appeared at the turn of the century (France: 1896, USA: 1902, Germany: 1907, Italy: 1908, Japan: 1912, etc. ...)

The idea of an international association has been attributed to Ernest Desnos and Alfred Pousson, both members of the team headed by Professor Felix Guyon at Necker Hospital in Paris. They convinced Guyon of the need to unite urologists of the world, at the risk of competing against the French congress, an already very popular event amongst international urologists. This idea generated a correspondence among urologists of many nations.

A provisional committee was formed, the members of which were representative of the specialty in Europe and America. Upon Desnos’s initiative a meeting of this committee took place in Paris in October 1907 to discuss and adopt the rules and regulations drawn up by Guyon and Albarran. Among some of the more important decisions which were made, it was agreed that every country should be invited to set up its own national committee and elect a delegate to an international committee. Each nation was to be limited in membership

At the conclusion of this groundbreaking meeting, the Association Internationale d’Urologie was founded, the statutes adopted unanimously and the first international committee created.

Felix Guyon of France was President, with as Vice-president Watson (from Boston USA) and Harrison (from London UK). Harrison passed away very soon after and was replaced by Israel (from Berlin Germany). Desnos (from Paris, France) was voted General-Secretary while Pasteau (also from Paris) assumed the role of Treasurer. The decision of organizing in Paris a meeting of this new international association was made, with four official languages: English, French, German, and Italian

The Association’s first congress took place in Paris September 30th 1908 with Albarran as congress President and Posner from Berlin and Watson from Boston as vice-presidents. After Guyon’s address, Israel and Albarran made two elegant and brilliant speeches laying the foundations of an international urological speciality

Four topics were discussed in the scientific meetings

- The pathology and treatment of anuria.
- Retention of urine without mechanical obstruction
- Indications for operation in renal tuberculosis
- Physiology of the prostate

An official dinner followed by a ballet performance and a concert with songs in several languages ended this first international congress of urology.

After a very successful meeting, the second congress was held in London in 1911. While the turnout was as large as in Paris, both Guyon and Albarran were absent. James Israel delivered the opening speech and Hurry Fenwick president of the congress gave a talk that was later to be regarded as prescient of the consensus-building role which would be played by our International Society:

“I warn you that every word that falls from the lips of our association, being weighted with the gravity and dignity of expert reasoning and knowledge, will be received with due consideration. That, if we be true to ourselves and honest in our mission, our consensus of opinion will, in the coming years, be held as “dicta” and be pregnant for good and evil.”

Prostatectomy was one of the most popular topics discussed during the congress. Four delegates reported on perineal prostatectomy, notably Hugh H. Young and Robert Proust, who stated an operative mortality of 3.7% and a return to normal sexual function in 59% of men who were sexually active preoperatively. However only 34 of the 450 patients who underwent surgery actually had cancer

The third congress was held in Berlin from June 2nd to June 5th 1914, just two months before the outbreak of the World War I.

However the scientific program (anaesthesia in urology, bacteriuria, nephrectomy in bilateral diseases of the kidney, prostatic cancer) and the social program (banquet in Kaiserhof) were carried out as arranged with James Israel as president of the congress, Federhoff from St Petersburg and Alessandri from Roma as vice-presidents.

During the opening ceremony Professor Israel gave an outstanding speech. He said

“Allow me to express the wish that the AIU could have a civilizing influence, relieving the suffering in humanity and keeping a sympathetic feeling among the nations”

Unfortunately this wish was not understood

The world was involved in a terrifying time. During more than 4 years the relationship between the urologists of many countries were embittered. SocietyThe Great War pre-empted regular meetings between urologists of belligerent nations. It is very sad to know that statutory exclusions were imposed for several years on certain countries. Membership was to be limited to the urologists of those countries which formed the League of Nations.

However in 1919, the Association was reborn but under a different title: the Société Internationale d’Urologie. The Society then numbered 243 members from 22 countries and conducted business in three official languages English, French, and Italian

A triennial congress schedule was re-established.

The first SIU congress took place in Paris 1921, in July as Felix Legueu was president of the SIU and president of the first congress.

The following subjects were discussed: nephritis and uremia, late results of treatment of injuries of the urethra, and retrograde pyelography.

The first congress of the SIU was a successful meeting.

Rome was named host city of the 1924 congress, while Brussels and Madrid hosted in 1927 and 1930, respectively. Spanish became one of the official languages. However it was not until 1933 that all nations wishing to participate were finally reunited.

In 1936, the congress took place in Vienna. E. L. Keyes was succeeded by Felix Legueu as president of the SIU. Once again the international tension was at a peak. However, Pasteau, General Secretary of the SIU announced that all continents were represented by delegates from 38 nations. China was admitted to the SIU and New York was designed for the SIU's next congress in 1939 with Pr. Bugbee as President.

But the New York congress was to be cancelled at the last minute due to the imminence of World War II. The tragedy that ensued put a halt to the work of international societies, including SIU's. And thus, between 1936 and 1947 no SIU congresses were held.

After the war, in 1946 Octave Pasteau distinguished figure of the SIU (Treasurer of the Society between 1907 and 1925 and General secretary 1925-1947!) initiated a meeting in Amsterdam under the presidency of Van Cappelen for reviving the SIU. G. G. Smith (USA) was nominated President, Clifford Morson (UK) and Pasteau vice-presidents and Fey succeeded Pasteau as General-Secretary, P. Bouteau becoming Treasurer. Fortunately it was decided that all countries, without exception, would be invited to form delegations. Postwar economic conditions raised the difficulties to plan to organize a congress in Amsterdam so much so that it ultimately took place in Saint Moritz (Switzerland). Despite modest attendance, 36 nations were represented in a climate of enthusiasm. This small meeting achieved its object in reviving interest in international urology.

The decision to meet again in two rather than three years was a wise one and the offer of Spanish urologists to hold the congress in Barcelona was gladly accepted. The meeting was a success.

In September 1952, for the very first time, an SIU congress took place outside Europe: the congress met in New York. With friendliness all members were made welcome by their American colleagues. In 1952, Rene Küss was elected General secretary in place of Bernard Fey. He held this positional function till 1979, when he was elected president.

The second half of the 20th century proved rather more uneventful for the SIU. Certainly, the Cold War affected international urology by restricting travel for some and financial support for others, but at the congresses the spirit of collegiality still prevailed.

Athens played host in 1955 and Stockholm followed in 1958. In 1961, for the first time the congress moved to South America, to Rio de Janeiro. London was next in 1964, and then Munich in 1967. In 1970, Tokyo hosted the SIU, for the first time in Asia.

In 1973, Amsterdam proved to be a turning point for the Society with its record turnout of over 1500 participants. This successful venture led to the mandating of a committee to study statutory reform.

New bylaws were submitted in 1976 at the Johannesburg, first SIU congress on African soil.

These new bylaws emphasized the importance of the National Sections and the need to keep them dynamic so as to have a positive impact on the Society. They also suggested new structures allowing better evaluation of scientific papers. During the Paris congress of 1979, under John Lattimer's presidency, the new bylaws were voted in by a large majority.

From that point onward, the SIU congresses enjoyed an increased popularity and attendance. San Francisco (1982) was followed by Vienna (1985), Buenos Aires (1988) and Seville (1991).

The Sydney Congress (1994) heralded a shift in paradigm to reflect on future orientations that would move away from traditions such as the insistence that SIU General Secretaries and Treasurers be from France.

The 1997 Montreal Congress, presided by Mostafa Elhilali, was a turning point in the SIU's evolution. New objectives were defined through revised bylaws that were then voted by the General Assembly. Major changes were enacted involving:

- Creation of a new executive board composed of the President, the President elect, Chairmen of 13 committees and four members elected
- Consolidation of all Society activities in a Central Office, eventually managing its own congresses and meetings
- Shift from a triennial to a biennial congress after 2000

Under this management, the SIU produced successful congresses in Singapore (2000), Stockholm (2002), Honolulu (2004), and Cape Town (2006). It significantly expanded the training and support activities that fulfil its mission *“to enable through international cooperation in education and research, all nations to achieve the highest quality of urological patient care”*.

The history of the SIU merges into the 20th century

Our Society began at the dawn of the 20th century, with the goal of bringing together established urologists from all around the globe. In this spirit of cooperation, each member of the Society can vote and thereby actively participate in its evolution. This philosophy has enabled our Society to overcome the challenges and the vicissitudes of the 20th century and has contributed to the extraordinary development of our specialty during this period.

There are three challenges for the world in the 21st century – a more equitable sharing of the world's resources, a greater sharing of skills and knowledge, and greater cultural exchange. The SIU must rise to the occasion to meet these challenges.