The History of the International Epidemiological Association Brought Up to Date

The IEA was founded in 1954 and a detailed history covering the years up to 1977 was published in the IJE in 1977. While it is unnecessary to repeat that account in full, it is perhaps worth recalling the origins of the association for those who have joined in recent years.

How it started
The International Corresponding Club, as the IEA was first called, was started in 1954 by John Pemberton of Great Britain and Harold N Willard of the United States with the advice and help of the late Robert Cruikshank. They had found, as travelling Research Fellows each in the other’s country, that they were handicapped by not being sufficiently well informed about the research and teaching in the field of social and preventive medicine in the various medical schools and research institutes. Initially it was to try and remedy this defect, that the Club was established on a small and informal basis. At first it was just a corresponding club whose object was ‘to facilitate the communication between physicians working for the most part in university departments of preventive and social medicine, or in research institutes devoted to these aspects of medicine, throughout the world’. This was to be achieved by the publication of a Bulletin twice a year and by members endeavouring to ‘ensure a friendly and hospitable welcome for visitors’ from other countries. The first issue of the Bulletin appeared in January 1955 and contained contributions from 26 correspondents from nine countries.

Correspondents soon felt the need to meet to discuss research and teaching and the first formal meeting took place at the Ciba Foundation in London at the end of June 1956. By this time there were 49 correspondents from 18 countries, and one of them, A Querido of Amsterdam, who attended the London meeting, invited the Club to hold its First International Scientific Meeting in the Netherlands. As a consequence a ‘Study Group on Current Epidemiological Research’, supported by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, took place at Noordwijk in September 1957. There were 58 participants representing 44 university departments from 20 countries at this meeting. A constitution was formulated and the following executive committee was elected:

- Robert Cruikshank (UK): Chairman
- Lester Breslow (USA)
- Branko Cvjetanovic (Yugoslavia)
- Charles M Fletcher (UK)
- A Querido (Netherlands)
- H J Ustvedt (Norway)
- John M Weir (USA)

Joint Editors of the Bulletin:
- John Pemberton (UK)
- Harold N. Willard (USA)

Epidemiology has developed a great deal since the foundation of the Association. It was only in the early 1950s that the term epidemiology began to be applied to non-communicable disease as well as to infectious disease. Indeed, as late as 1960 at a meeting of epidemiologists in Prague, the late Donald Reid, with all his persuasive wit, was unable to persuade some distinguished epidemiologists from Eastern Europe that epidemics were not always spread by ‘a living chain of organisms’ and that the dancing mania of the middle ages was just as much an epidemic as measles.

A good deal of the early ‘missionary’ work of the Association was carried out under the inspiration of our first chairman, Robert Cruikshank, who never ceased to tell us that we must ‘spread the gospel’. We were, of course, aware that many of the most serious health problems were in the poorer countries and that these were particularly amenable to the epidemiological approach. For this reason, members made special efforts to contact their opposite numbers in Asia, Africa and South America when on their travels and to encourage them to become members. WHO helped in these early beginnings and this association has continued to the present time with benefits to both organizations.

Membership
The number of countries represented in the Association has increased rapidly in recent years along with a satisfactory increase in total membership as the following table shows.
The geographical distribution by WHO region in 1983 was:

- Africa: 4%
- The Americas: 38%
- Eastern Mediterranean: 6%
- Europe: 34%
- South East Asia: 5%
- Western Pacific: 13%

The recent successful regional meetings in Addis-Ababa and Singapore have helped to spread the membership still wider, but there are still more than 50 countries without any IEA members, and the USA and UK are still relatively overrepresented accounting for 41% of the membership.

The latest Membership Directory was printed by the IEA and issued to all members in 1982.

**Honorary membership**

The constitution allows Council to elect Honorary Members providing they do not exceed 2% of the membership.

Since the last list was published we have sadly lost one of our founders, Harold Willard (obituary *IJE*), and Dr John Gordon.

The following are honorary members:

- Guillermo Arbona
- Sir John Brotherston
- Sir Frank MacFarlane Burnet
- Marcolino G Candau
- Archibald L Cochrane
- Professor Su De Long
- Sir Austin Bradford Hill
- Alexander D Langmuir
- Chitnaman Govind Pandit
- John Pemberton
- Dr Abdul Hosian Taba

**Council and Executive Committee 1977–1981**

- Dr John Brotherston (Scotland) President
- Dr B S Hetzel (Australia) Secretary
- Dr W J Eyleenbosch (Belgium) Treasurer
- Dr M A Faghih (Iran) until 29.11.79
- Council from 21.9.77
- Executive Committee from 29.11.79
- Executive Committee from 29.11.79

- Dr C Buck (Canada)
- Dr G Cardona (Puerto Rico)
- Dr W J Eyleenbosch (Belgium)
- Dr R Sharma (India)
- Dr I Shigematsu (Japan)
- Dr M H Wahdan (Egypt)
- Dr F Wurapa (Ghana)
- Dr A E Bennett (England) Editor of *IJE*
- Dr Kerr L White (USA)

**Council and Executive Committee 1981–1984**

- Dr C Buck (Canada) President
- Dr W J Eyleenbosch (Belgium) Vice president
- Dr W M Garraway (UK) Secretary
- Dr P Stolley (USA) Treasurer
- Dr C J G MacKenzie (Canada)
- Dr J N Kostrzewski (Poland)

**International Scientific Meetings**

- 1st Noordwijk, Netherlands, September 1957
- 2nd Cali, Colombia, August 1959
- 3rd Korcula, Yugoslavia, August 1961
- 4th Princeton, USA, August 1964
- 5th Primosten, Yugoslavia, August 1968
- 6th Primosten, Yugoslavia, August 1971
- 7th University of Sussex, England, August 1974
- 8th San Juan, Puerto Rico, September 1977
- 9th Edinburgh, August 1981
- 10th Vancouver, August 1984

**Regional Scientific Meetings**

- University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria, April 1970
- Sydney, Australia, August 1973
- University of Isfahan, Iran, March 1976
- African Region, Addis-Ababa, April 1983
  Followed by a workshop on Epidemiological Methods for Research in Tropical Diseases
- South East Asia and Western Pacific Regions, Singapore, October 1983
Inter-Regional Conference
Karachi, March 1978
On the Teaching of Statistics to Medical Undergraduates.

Workshop on cancer epidemiology
Sydney, November 1978
The Association co-sponsored this workshop with the IARC.

Publications
Fourteen publications were listed in the last history including five books, eight transactions of meetings and the IJE from 1972 onwards. Since then further books have been published by the IEA or in association with the IEA:

- Epidemiology and Health, W W Holland and S Gilderdale (eds). Henry Kimpton, 1977
- Basic Health Care in Developing Countries, B Hetzel (ed). Sponsored by IEA and WHO, Oxford University Press, 1978
- Planning and Organising a Health Survey, W Lutz. Published by the IEA in collaboration with WHO, 1981
- Sampling: How to select people, households, places, to study community health. W Lutz. Published by the IEA in collaboration with WHO, 1982

The International Journal of Epidemiology
The first number of the IJE appeared in the Spring of 1972 and it replaced the informal news Bulletin. It marked an important stage in the growth of the IEA. Under its first three editors, W W Holland, 1971–1978, A E Bennett, 1978–1981 and C du Ve Florey, 1981–, the journal, which is published quarterly by Oxford University Press has achieved a considerable reputation for its papers on original epidemiological research. It also publishes book reviews and Association news and exchanges abstracts of articles with the Revue d’Epidémiologie et de Santé Publique.

By 1983 papers had been received from 45 countries and the circulation was about 2000.

Archives of the IEA
J Pemberton was appointed archivist to the IEA in 1977 and the Association has been generously given storage space by the Kings Fund to house the archives at the Kings Fund Centre, 126 Albert Street, London NW1 7NF.

Relationships with other international organizations
The IEA has continued to collaborate with WHO as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). The president or vice president attend meetings of WHO, including the General Assembly and the meetings of the NGOs, and give advice on behalf of the Association.

Affiliation to CIOMS was terminated in 1981 as an economy measure.

Finance
Dues from members approximately cover the basic administrative costs of the Association. However, if it is to fulfil its scientific and educational role in advancing epidemiology on a worldwide basis, additional funds and other resources are needed. The Association has been successful since its inception in attracting funds from a wide variety of organizations which were listed in the last account. The Rockefeller Foundation has supported the IEA generously from its first International Scientific Meeting in 1957 up to the present. WHO and the Milbank Fund have also continued to support the Association with generous grants and resources, such as co-sponsorship of scientific meetings and publications. Without these, and the other grants referred to, it would have been impossible for the IEA to have succeeded in its aim to spread knowledge and skills in epidemiology to so many countries. Much, however, remains to be done in particular in developing regional activities more widely and in extending the membership to countries as yet unrepresented in the Association.

The Constitution and Byelaws
The current Constitution and Byelaws were agreed at the 8th International Scientific Meeting at Puerto Rico in September 1977 and were reproduced in the March 1984 issue of the IJE.

REFERENCES