In this issue of *Occupational Medicine*

This issue is devoted to occupational health research from the Netherlands. It reflects a growing number of submitted research papers from our close neighbours in recent years for which they are to be commended. Significantly this is research that has a strong resonance with the practice of UK occupational physicians.

The history of our two nations has always been closely intertwined. Dutch engineers drained the East Anglian fens, Dutch thinkers fuelled contemporary religious debate, and Dutch investors helped to finance the Bank of England and the national debt thus enabling a global empire [1,2]. The early fellows of the Royal Society included Dutch scientists such as the physicist Christiaan Huygens, the microscopist Anton van Leeuwenhoek and the physician Hermann Boerhaave. And of course our royal family changed tack after William of Orange invaded England in 1688 and dislodged the Catholic James II from the English throne.

It is interesting to speculate whether closer links in occupational medicine would also yield dividends. Despite a working population of little more than a quarter of that in the UK, NVAB, the Dutch Society of Occupational Medicine, has 2000 physician members and thus exceeds our own Society. In 1998, NVAB started a programme for the development and implementation of evidence-based practice guidelines and to help achieve this established a Centre of Excellence in 2003. The Centre of Excellence is promoting the development and implementation of multidisciplinary clinical guidelines for work-related health problems and the development and organization of medical audit. As you will see from the papers published in this issue, the research activity emanating from the Netherlands is very practically orientated with the focus on sickness absence, rehabilitation and exploring the role of psychosocial factors in work-related ill health. This is research that *Occupational Medicine* is interested in publishing as it is practical and aimed at the practising occupational physician.

To accompany this special issue, we have also created the first ever virtual issue of *Occupational Medicine*. This is an issue that exists only electronically and can be accessed through the website for free by subscribers. The virtual issue has collected all Dutch research published in *Occupational Medicine* during the last 5 years and consists of more than 25 original papers. Professor Alex Burdorf from the Department of Public Health at the University Medical Centre Rotterdam has reviewed this research and, as he notes, the growth in Dutch occupational health research output has been impressive [3]. He examines the reasons behind this growth, something we would do well to emulate and adopt as we have done so successfully with so many other Dutch ideas. To help further promote a ‘gezamenlijk commitment’ or *entente cordiale* [4] we are making this special issue and the accompanying virtual issue freely available to all NVAB members and we hope they will see the benefits of *Occupational Medicine* and closer liaison with our Society. We are very grateful to all our Dutch contributors and in particular to David Bruinvels who kindly helped co-ordinate the issue. To complete our Dutch theme, the cover artwork in this issue is Pieter Bruegel’s Tower of Babel.

Finally, it is with sadness that we carry the obituary of Denis D’Auria, former editor of *Occupational Medicine* [5]. More than anyone in my opinion, Denis laid the foundation for the journal today and without his vision and ambition it would not have enjoyed its continued growth and success. He was a prolific editorial writer and his ability to repeatedly produce erudite pieces of prose at the beginning of each journal never ceased to amaze. His first editorial as editor shows just how far reaching his vision was and how much today’s journal owes to that foresight [6]. His final editorial shows just how much the journal meant to him, how much of himself he gave to it, and how he more than anyone polished ‘the jewel in the Society’s crown’ [7].

John Hobson
Honorary Editor

References