

Celebrating 50 years of the *British Journal of Hospital Medicine*

For those of you who, like me, can vividly remember the past, cast your mind back to 1966. For those of you whose journey had not then begun, just use your imagination.

It was a pretty tumultuous year. We were trapped by the horrendous Vietnam war, which the then prime minister, Harold Wilson, to his lasting credit, refused to support militarily. Wilson, who won two elections that year, was more concerned with bringing what was then Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, to heel.

The Cultural Revolution in China had begun with all its horrific implications for intellectuals. And, *tout ça change*, there were race riots in the United States. Leonid Brezhnev became the communist leader of the Soviet Union, which launched Luna 10, the first space probe to enter orbit around the moon.

Ian Brady and Myra Hindley were found guilty of some appalling murders committed against children on Saddleworth Moor. Buster Edwards was arrested for his involvement in the Great Train Robbery of 1963.

Both Margaret Thatcher and now Theresa May have followed in the footsteps of the first significant woman in modern times to have been elected prime minister – Indira Gandhi of India. Eighteen years later she was assassinated by one of her favourite guards.

Culturally, we were in the grips of the ‘swinging 60s’ with John Lennon apologising for describing The Beatles as being ‘more

popular than Jesus’. The Rolling Stones released *Paint it Black* and Bob Dylan *Blonde on Blonde*.

And, before I forget, England beat Germany 4-2 in the final of the World Cup at Wembley!

However, in the world of medicine, another important event took place, unnoticed by the general public, but one of great significance for hospital doctors.

In October 1966 *Hospital Medicine*, the Review Journal for Hospital Medical Staff, now morphed into *British Journal of Hospital Medicine*, rolled off the presses to great acclaim.

Hospital Medicine was the brainchild of a doctor, Michael Hession. Dr Hession believed that the continued extension of medical specialisation and greater in-depth knowledge of a particular subject, with the emphasis on original research, needed to be balanced. Hospital doctors were crying out for a journal that provided a more generic approach to postgraduate education. It was a surprisingly simple idea, but in the context of the 1960s, an inspired one.

The editorial in the launch issue of *Hospital Medicine* pronounced: ‘Existing journals continue to provide an essential service as outlets for the publication of original work. Each of these papers contributes to the detailed knowledge of a particular subject, but the reader who demands a broader view of that subject almost inevitably finds it necessary to piece together a large number of papers appearing at different times in different journals.’

During the past 50 years – more than 31 years in my company’s hands, Hession having sold the journal to International

Thomson Publishing from whom I bought it in 1985 – we have ascribed to the values to which the founder subscribed.

Publishing a clinical journal successfully for 50 years, given the constantly changing times in medical education and publishing, is an enormous milestone and one about which I feel very proud. There are now 65 magazines within the Mark Allen Group and *BJHM* was the first journal I acquired and the one that has had the most profound effect on the way my company has progressed.

During many of these years the journal benefited greatly from the leadership of my friend Dr Jack Tinker, who, sadly, died 6 years ago. He did more than anyone to ensure that *BJHM* became so professionally well respected. And it is entirely fitting that Jack’s former registrar, Rob Miller, is the doctor now at the editorial helm of the journal, carrying its torch as a ‘multispecialty review journal for hospital doctors’.

Jack and Rob would be the first to concede that, without the backing of selfless and committed editorial boards, authors, reviewers and dedicated staff, the journal would not have been able to succeed so well.

Will *BJHM* be around in another 50 years’ time? I would like to think so, but who can tell now? However, one thing is for sure. The need for a generic clinical voice for hospital doctors will be as relevant as ever then as it is now and was a half century ago.

Michael Hession created something very special. In one form or another, whether this is in print, digital or in an entirely different format which we cannot imagine, the soul of *BJHM* will never die, if hospital medicine is to continue to survive and prosper.

Here’s to 2066! **BJHM**

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