

The Arquivos Brasileiros de Oftalmologia and I

Os Arquivos Brasileiros de Oftalmologia e eu

Harley E. A. Bicas¹

1. Editor-in-Chief, 2000-2009, Arquivos Brasileiros de Oftalmologia.

My first paper in the A.B.O. (Arquivos Brasileiros de Oftalmologia) as published in 1968, “Disturbances of accommodation in heterophorias”, 31(3):75-85. In 1981, I became a member of the Editorial Board of the journal, most likely due to the publication of seven papers of a series entitled “Studies on ocular mechanics” in the previous year. In 1990, I was fortunate to be selected as part of the Editorial Council of the journal and, in 1996, to become one of its three Scientific Editors. The other two were Rubens Belfort Mattos (father) and Rubens Belfort Mattos Jr.

To be considered among the very responsible editors of the A.B.O. was a high honor. As a matter of fact, the A.B.O. was founded in 1938 by Waldemar Rangel Belfort Mattos (1897-1956), the grandfather of Rubens Jr., and since then has been administered by the family (although in 1977, the Brazilian Council of Ophthalmology became its main sponsor). In July 08, 1997, Rubens, the elder, passed away, so the number of Scientific Editors was reduced to two: Rubens Jr. (who, effectively, controlled the publication), while I simply followed his leadership without the need for comments.

Then, in 1999, at a dinner in Recife, in which the hosts of the XXX Brazilian Congress of Ophthalmology were paying homage to the speakers (I believe it was September 05), Rubens Jr. called me aside to communicate that I should assume command of the A.B.O. I wonder how difficult the decision to give up that leadership must have been for Rubens Jr. since it represented not only leaving the Journal but, more importantly, trusting in someone

else to continue a 61-year-long tradition of his family. Actually, he had strong reasons for the first part, leaving the A.B.O.; he was committed, among other relevant functions, to be the President of the Brazilian Congress of Ophthalmology (2001), the President of the Pan American Association of Ophthalmology (2001-2003), and the President of the World Congress of Ophthalmology to be held for the first time in a Latin American country (Brazil, 2006), in addition to the leadership of the Department of Ophthalmology at the Federal University of São Paulo. However, for the second problem, that of leaving the family’s tradition, he was going beyond a point of no return. Therefore, the decision was difficult for me, too...

Surely forged by enormous responsibilities, Rubens Jr. is a gentleman. He was risking a powerful bet, challenging the goddess of fortune. Nevertheless, besides that single talk-by which the transmission of the legendary legacy of the Belfort Mattos family was completed-he did not explicitly make any requests, no admonitions, no conditions, simply a smart lesson about how to trust. I had to undertake the job without having a few much needed lessons. Hence, after such a sudden transition, my first administrative meeting was in September 27, and my first move was to do nothing to change the structure which was working so well. That proved to be one of my best decisions. I kept the team of Associate Editors (Cristina Muccioli, Mauro Campos, Mauro Goldchmit, Samir Jacob Bechara and Vital Paulino Costa). They helped with the right choices of referees, advanced excellent judgments about the analyzed drafts and guaranteed the good quality of the publications. In 2003, Paulo Elias Correa Dantas was included as the sixth Associate Editor. The meetings were always of the face to face kind, usually with all editors present, in a room at the former headquarters of the Brazilian Council of Ophthalmology (C.B.O.) in Alameda Santos, São Paulo. These friends endured the enormous responsibility of ensuring a good scientific level for the A.B.O., and, in

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practice, they were the real rulers of the publication during the years in which I also served as the President of the Brazilian Council of Ophthalmology (2005-2007). In 2008, Goldchmit, Bechara and Costa asked to leave the team, and Muccioli, Campos and Dantas were named Co-Editors, while 14 other colleagues assumed the job of Associate Editors.

However, a journal needs other foundations as well. Claudete Moral, acting as the Editorial Secretary, was the perfect hostess for editorial meetings, supervising everything, receiving and sending by post the materials from and to the authors and their referees. Her daughter, Claudia Moral, was admitted in 2002 to help her with the crescent A.B.O.'s demands. If a paper were approved for publication, Paulo Imamura was in charge of the final revision of its language. At the end of 2001, Hanna Rotschild was engaged to supervise the English writings. Henrique Kikuta was the Commercial Manager till 2003, when Adamo Lui Netto took his place.

The academic acknowledgement of a scientific journal is not limited to the quality of its papers. So, my "second" movement in my new job was to enhance the presentation of the A.B.O. for acceptance by international databases and indexation agencies. These elements "define" the importance of a journal, which can in turn attract more important papers, increasing the prestige among the scientific community and closing a virtuous circle. If a periodical publication is not blessed by such agencies, its academic value may be considered null. These institutes start the examination of a journal by scrutinizing a huge amount of minute details, which are unnoticed by the common reader of a journal, who is only focused on the essence of the texts. Therefore, in one of my first A.B.O. administrative meetings, I invited two recognized Brazilian librarians (Edna Terezinha Rother and Maria Elisa Rangel Braga) to discuss the subject of the technical edition of the magazine. One of them asked for the most recent published issue of the A.B.O., open it at random and immediately said "I already see an error"- which was "Arq Bras Oftal" instead of "Arq Bras Oftalmol" at the bottom of that (any) page of the magazine. It might have been a trick, but that gave them a contract to guide the A.B.O. along the delicate roads of bibliotechniques. Thanks to God for my inspiration, thanks to them for what they have done for the A.B.O.: after being included in LILACS (Latin American Literature in Health Sciences), we were accepted by SciELO (Scientific Electronic Library Online, 2001), The Free Medical Journals (2002), Latindex (Regional System of

Information Online for Scientific Journals of Latin America, Caribe, Spain and Portugal, 2002), Periodica (Index of Latin American Journals of Science, 2002), MEDLINE/PubMed (Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System Online, the database for The National Library of Medicine, 2005), EMBASE (Excerpta Medica, 2005), Scopus (Elsevier, 2008) and The Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) - Web of Knowledge (Web of Science, Thomson Reuters) at the end of my term. Support from the CNPq (the Brazilian National Council for Research) came in 2004.

As part of this process, at the very beginning of my time as the Editor-in-Chief, the A.B.O. was registered with the International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) 0004-2749, a code for identification of the publication. It also obtained a certified trade mark, "Arquivos Brasileiros de Oftalmologia, A.B.O.". Since the first issue in 2002, another bibliographic certification, the CODEN, was formalized for the A.B.O. (the code is registered as AQBOAP).

Since 1977, the C.B.O. had the A.B.O. as its official scientific vehicle, although the property of the journal remained with the Belfort Mattos family. The donation of the A.B.O. from this family to the C.B.O. was celebrated in February of 2000 during the Symposium Moacyr Álvaro in São Paulo, but the respective and definitive formal document was signed in Natal, in September 08, 2000, during the Brazilian Congress of Ophthalmology (document registered under the number 2.643.658 at the First Office of Titles and Documents of São Paulo, in September 29, 2000). This document, which I had the honor to detail (I stress again, without any demands from Rubens Belfort Mattos Jr. or anyone else) states that "*The Arquivos Brasileiros de Oftalmologia pass by being administered by a superior board named Conselho Administrativo, composed by five members, ...three of them freely appointed by the representative of the Belfort Mattos' family ...by the President of the Brazilian Council of Ophthalmology and by the Editor-in-Chief of the Arquivos Brasileiros de Oftalmologia*", a meritorious deference to the Belfort Mattos family due to its 61 years of continuous and honorable, but abrasive, administration.

To my despair, I knew that very few of the oldest issues of the A.B.O. were available. The probability of losing them along with the memory of the journal was high. Therefore, we decided to provide complete copies of the entire collection of the A.B.O. to some important libraries in Brazil (2000). Additionally, the abstracts, na-

mes of authors and key-words for the papers published between 1938 and 1985, as well as the complete texts of papers published since 1986, were digitalized for records in CDs and distributed to the C.B.O.'s members (2000). Six new editions of these CDs were updated each year till 2007. After this period, there was no reason for such reproductions, because the electronic publication of the A.B.O. was available (since 1999).

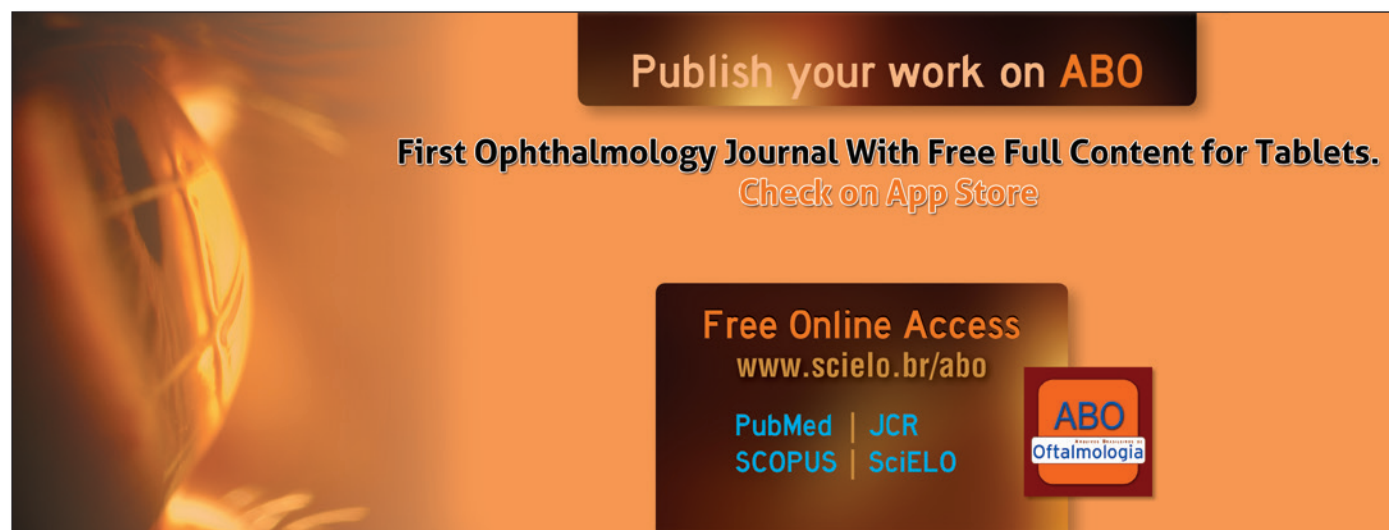
The printed form grew from 5,500 copies issue 1 of 2000 to 7,500 (issue 6 in 2005), and then stabilized (the peak was a printing of 8,500 copies for the Supplement of the year 2000). The number of pages in 2000 for the six regular issues was 532, but increased during the ten years while I served as the Editor-in-Chief, with a peak of 1,068 pages in 2007. The first (four) papers in English appeared in 2000 (issue 3). Besides the traditional Supplements with the abstracts of papers presented in the annual Brazilian Congresses, three other special issues were published: "Vision and Visual Perception" (2003), "Editorial Procedures" (2003) and "Contact Lenses, Ocular Surface and Dry Eye" (2008).

The electronic publication of the A.B.O. (ABONET) started in October, 1999. In 2002, electronic interaction

for authors, referees and editors (ABOONLINE) was implemented, though it gained full momentum in 2005. The electronic ISSN 1678-2925 was obtained in 2004. Access to the A.B.O.'s contents, which was possible through the A.B.O.'s website (ABONET), The Free Medical Journals and SciELO, was extended in 2009, to Periodica, CAPES (the Brazilian agency for academic support), Scirus ("for scientific information only") and Copernicus.

Today, *all the logos* in the title page of the A.B.O., either for information on sites where the A.B.O.'s contents may be accessed, and/or for the databases that acknowledge the journal, were inserted before the end of 2009. This represents a high honor for that ten-year period. Still more surprising is that recognition of the A.B.O. was obtained in a time in which the greater part of the papers was published in *Portuguese!* (Please, do not take this as a criticism of the beneficial and unavoidable internationalization of the A.B.O.!)

In summary, I feel absolutely proud of every member of the team that paved the way for the A.B.O. taking off on its magnificent flight. The A.B.O. will surely reach greater heights in the future. My reverent thanks to every one of them.



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