

80 years of Arquivos Brasileiros de Oftalmologia (ABO)

80 anos dos Arquivos Brasileiros de Oftalmologia (ABO)

Rubens Belfort Jr.¹

1. Head Professor, Department of Ophthalmology, Universidade Federal de São Paulo and President Vision Institute IPEPO; Member National Academy of Medicine and Brazilian Academy of Sciences.

The celebration of 80 years of *Arquivos Brasileiros de Oftalmologia* (ABO) is gratifying and highlights the importance of Brazilian ophthalmology in the international scientific community. Even in developed and culturally rich countries, scientific journals often lack such longevity.

In the period around the Revolution of 1930, the scientific “effervescence” in Brazil was great and many journals were launched. However, almost all of the journals were quickly discontinued. ABO was introduced during this time, and from the beginning, it was committed to continuing publication and circulation. Its logo portrays a pre-Colombian boat-like craft from Marajo Island in the Para State of Brazil as a symbol of the mobility of scientific information. The logo was chosen for its similarity to other ancient pieces from Africa and Europe representing the eye and ophthalmology, as present in different continents and periods.

ABO had experienced personal disagreements among the leadership, with a risk of discontinuation. Thus, its Editor and Founder, Waldemar Belfort Mattos, pledged to keep the Archives alive, and he managed and endorsed it financially until his death in 1956 (18 years after the launch of the journal).

After the death of Waldemar Belfort Mattos, his son, Rubens Belfort Mattos, assumed the role of Editor and continued the policy, with attempts to promote the Archives with priority in Latin America. Rubens Belfort Mattos managed the Archives for more than 40 years. He was already its general secretary since 1950, and he continued to support it economically. In this period, the Archives often faced many threats. The most important of these was the lack of scientific and financial support.

At numerous instances, ABO had to request colleagues to provide articles and educational material for printing in order to maintain periodicity. The Editor and his wife also covered the ever-present financial deficit. Thus, even during wars and the various crises in Brazil, ABO never stopped circulation.

Shortly after the second war, the Europeans knew that interesting articles had been published and were lost owing to the lack of communication. The French Society of Ophthalmology carried out a program to republish interesting scientific articles for first-world knowledge. Among them were articles from ABO, including an article by its Founder Waldemar Belfort Mattos on his experience with retinal detachment surgery.

ABO has always been present in the international literature, and in addition to maintaining the periodicity factor, which has been important for its survival, it has maintained the excellence of scientific information. Since the initial issues, articles from many of the biggest names in Brazilian ophthalmology have been published, disseminating original scientific information and circulating the articles in other countries.

From the 1970s, ABO began systematic peer review successfully, despite many initially negative responses by authors who did not understand the reasons for rejection or the comments from reviewers with regard to requests for changes.

The consolidation of the Brazilian Archives of Ophthalmology nationally and internationally in parallel with the maturation and stabilization of the Brazilian Council of Ophthalmology led to a natural convergence culminating in the donation of ABO to the Conselho Brasileiro de Oftalmologia in 2000.

The progressive nature of the journal was always defended, and in the contract, which was well delineated under the leadership of Harley Bicas, the independence of the Archives was preserved, ensuring that it would never be influenced by politics and that the following

Submitted for publication: December 20, 2017

Accepted for publication: January 6, 2018

Funding: No specific financial support was available for this study.

Disclosure of potential conflicts of interest: None of the authors have any potential conflict of interest to disclose.

Corresponding author: Rubens Belfort Jr.

E-mail: prof.belfort@clinicabelfort.com.br



ideals that sustained it would always prevail: value of science, virtue, ethics, and good and balanced growth of Brazilian ophthalmology. After the extended leaderships of Waldemar Belfort Mattos from 1938 to 1957, Rubens Belfort Mattos from 1958 to 1990, and myself from 1980 to 1990, with the need for timely renewal of the Editor, *ABO* was led by Harley Bicas from 2000 to 2009 and Wallace Chamon from 2010 to 2016. These two Editors continued the editorial line with great emphasis and support from the Editorial Board. *ABO* progressively increased its national and international consolidation and scientific validation. Since 2017, Eduardo Rocha has led *ABO* as the fifth Editor, with continued excellence.

Over these 80 years, hundreds of ophthalmologists, as scientific reviewers, have analyzed several thousand articles, free of charge, improving the scientific level and coverage of publication. Their contributions to the journal should be remembered and highly valued.

The scientific level depends mainly on the authors, but increasingly also on the reviewers. On one hand, we have a high number of qualified ophthalmologists, but on the other hand, critical analysis of scientific publications, without pay, can burden the few reviewers who assess articles with maximum efficiency. The Scientific Editorship may be revised in the future to provide greater financial support to the Editor. Another challenge is the

need for faster publication, with a reduction in the time between receiving the article and paper or electronic publication. Publication of scientific articles within a few weeks is difficult but should be a priority. For this, we depend not only on the Editor and Editorial Board but also on a large group of competent, engaged, informed, and productive scientific advisors.

A promising aspect indicating the high performance and scientific maturity of Brazilian ophthalmology was the introduction of the yearly honorable mention of the best scientific reviewers.

Another challenge is the inclusion of the scientific material of the Archives in other types of social scientific media. Nowadays, professional, medical, and even social networks have a very important role in the dissemination of scientific information and stimulation of new ideas and investigations.

It is impossible to predict the development and existence of *ABO* in 80 years or even 20 years, but most likely, it will continue to perform its function. I look forward to its centennial celebration in 2037, and I hope to commemorate the improvement in scientific research and the value of ophthalmology.

This success and celebration should be shared by all, and I would like to conclude with an attachment of the first editorial of *ABO*, for its historical importance and also for the currentity of its purposes.