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1.2 The Nordic Committee on Quality Control and the Nordic Protein Project

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Background

In 1969 at a Nordic Congress for Clinical Chemistry and Clinical Physiology in Otnäs outside Helsinki, Finland, it was decided to start special committees to promote progress in special areas, considered to be of importance for the development of the whole subject of clinical chemistry. Three committees were organized, *viz.* for reference values, quality control and enzymatic analyses. After a few years it was also decided that a committee for reference methodology was needed. Each committee had one or two members from each of the four countries: Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. The establishment of these committees implied coordination of the work in the Nordic countries and plans with specified objectives were made up and carried out. The economic resources for these activities were, however, very limited. Most support came from the national societies for clinical chemistry with some complements from industries producing reagents and analytical equipments. It was a major breakthrough when the Nordic Society for Clinical Chemistry in 1973 succeeded in convincing the Nordic Council that Quality Control and the use of Reference Values for healthy and defined sick populations were two important issues of great importance for laboratory medicine. The Nordic Council of Ministers were given the responsibility to organize a board and a secretariat with a moderate budget which could support projects along the suggested lines. In 1977 this Nordic project called NORDKEM started and have with modified organization and objectives continued for 17 years. It was now possible to give financial support to the committees, which allowed them to meet more frequently to organize symposia and courses, and to print reports.

Activities within the Nordic Committee on Quality Control 1977-86

During this time period the Committee had the following members:
Denmark: Adam Uldall; Per Hyltoft Petersen (from 1985).
Finland: Erkki Leskinen (1977-1985); Aimo Ruokonen (1986); Timo Koivula (1986).
Sweden: Carl-Henric de Verdier; Kristoffer Hellsing (1977).
Associate member: Torsten Aronsson.

The committee was involved in several types of activities. As examples the following can be mentioned:

1. Design of Quality Control. This has been the main objective for the committee, which with the support of NORDKEM ran a long-term project involving many laboratories. The results of the project concerned internal quality control, programs for assessing and decreasing interlaboratory variation, external quality assessment and effects of the control materials, national external quality control programs, and tools for improvement. The report was published in 1984 (7).
2. Teaching activities. Several NORDKEM courses for academically trained clinical chemists were organized with participants from all five Nordic countries.
3. Research. Many scientific papers and four doctoral theses (1, 4-6) were published as a result of the stimulus of the quality assurance activities within the committee.
4. Coordination of regional and national external quality assessment programs (2,3) and Nordic survey were organized by the Nordic Committee on Quality Control.

These survey activities convinced the members of the committee that the quality within two analytical areas was unacceptably poor and in need of special actions. These areas were analyses of Serum/Plasma proteins and of hormones, and the committee decided to start with the first area and appointed at the Nordic congress in Odense in 1986 a special "ad hoc group" with the following members: Per Hyltoft Petersen (DK) coordinator, Ole Blaabjerg (DK), Kerttu Irjala (SF), Arto Icén (SF), Trond Reinskou (N), and Kristoffer Hellsing (S). The committee recommended NORDKEM to economically support the work of this group.

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