

# A short history of the ‘**Medicine and Sports Science**’ Series

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## Ernst Jokl, a visionary

In the sixties Professor Ernst Jokl, then chair of the Research Committee of ICSPE (the International Council of Sport and Physical Education, an NGO with consultative status A with UNESCO), developed the idea of an international scientific book series on Sports Medicine. Without doubt he was a “visionary”, someone with an unusual gift to foresee what the future would bring in this field. Ernst Jokl had extensive experience in the field of medicine and sport science. His interest in these topics was largely due to his training in physical education, and later in medicine, as well as his experience as an athlete (track, varsity champion). He was particularly impressed by the research of Professors Buytendijk and Kohlrausch at the Olympic Games of Amsterdam in 1928.

Ever since then Ernst Jokl devoted most of his research work, as well as during his “ex-patriate” stay in South Africa (before and after World War II) as later in the USA (his “adopted fatherland”), to many aspects of sports medicine and related sport sciences. Most importantly he was also co-founder of the American College of Sports Medicine which stands today as the world’s largest and most prominent organisation of sports medicine and sport science. Indeed sports medicine was just starting to bud and thus the time was ripe to commence a specific Sports Medicine Series.

No doubt Ernst Jokl had an excellent relationship with Thomas Karger and we believe that little persuasion was needed for the publisher to agree to the initiation of a Series called “Medicine and Sport”. It is clear that the exceptional geographical position of Mexico City (2400m altitude), the site of the upcoming Olympic Games of Mexico in 1968, played a significant role and aroused much interest from sports physicians and sport scientists.

Therefore, it seemed to be opportune and highly appropriate to start a new Series at that time with a volume devoted to the topic, “Exercise and Altitude” (Jokl, E. and Jokl, P., 1968).

## Role of ICSSPE’s Research Committee

The existence of the Research Committee of ICSPE (now ICSSPE, the International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education [www.icsspe.org](http://www.icsspe.org)) certainly played a major facilitating and initiating role in the foundation of the Series. Ernst Jokl, in collaboration with Dr. Ernst Simon (the first Secretary-General of the Research Committee), had already produced in 1964 a once-only volume “International Research in Sport and Physical Education” (edited on behalf of ICSPE). In this remarkable volume (730 pages!) many medical and sport science contributions (including cultural anthropology, physical education, psychology, sociology, physique, body composition and growth, physical fitness) from numerous eminent scientists appeared. This volume can be considered as the first impulse and the precursor of the Karger Series on Medicine and Sport Science.

Themes were introduced mainly by Ernst Jokl and his closest collaborators on the Research Committee of ICS(S)PE, but occasionally - and after conversations with Thomas Karger – also suggested by the publisher. One has to realize the enormous growing interest and activity of several domains of the sport sciences from the 1960s (cf. Hebbelinck, 1983, 1984).

The Research Committee of ICS(S)PE played, under the leadership of Ernst Jokl, a stimulating and facilitating role in this developmental process, amongst other things, in sponsoring study seminars and scientific meetings in various fields of sports medicine and science, often in collaboration with UNESCO and FIMS.

## Scientific quality

Each new volume was and still is entrusted to one or more scientists who is/are responsible for the “scientific rigour” of its content. This maxim has been central to guaranteeing consistently good scientific quality. Furthermore, each volume is also scrutinized by the Series Editors and each contribution is approved before the manuscripts go to press.

Ernst Jokl emphasised in particular the medical and clinical aspects but over time he assumed a more open mind for the wide range of sports sciences. Marcel Hebbelinck worked closely with Jokl from the very first volume in 1968. In the beginning it was not always easy to cut short his somewhat negative attitude towards physical educators as sport scientists. In a way this was understandable as physical education training was mainly school-oriented, i.e. with a primary focus on the education of the gymnastics teacher. Despite the sound scientific education there was not necessarily a strong research training orientation.

Apart from a few exceptions (such as Doctoral programs in physical education in medical faculties in Belgium and the USA), it has only been since the early 1960s that sports scientists were trained and different domains of the sport sciences emerged. This genesis of the sport sciences as a discreet area would subsequently underpin the topics of diverse volumes of the Series.

We must admit that (too) little emphasis and attention has been given to the human-scientific aspects of sports science. This is perhaps due to that fact that the biomedical sciences have had a much longer tradition in scientific research on physical work and effort (cf. *Arbeitsphysiologie*, *Applied Physiology*, *Physiology*) and that prominent physicians were active in this field (e.g. WHO Director Matti Karvonen, and Nobel Prize Laureate, A.V. Hill). It is also remarkable that many of these pioneers - before they became doctors in the medical sciences or in physical education – had their formative training as sports teacher (e.g. P-O. Astrand, B. Saltin, J. Poortmans, and H. Kemper).

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## Uniqueness of the Series

The fact that this Series was founded in 1968 and has developed in a fine series of now fifty volumes as well as the impressive diversity of the topics addressed makes the Series unique.

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## Name change

Ernst Jokl handed over the torch to Marcel Hebbelinck in 1984 when he 'retired,' or perhaps when he realized that he could not remain forever as the only Series Editor. In those early days the title of co-editor was referred to as "Assistant Editor".

One cannot argue with the fact that Ernst Jokl was a strong personality and relished his lead role. Similarly, there is little doubt that he very much liked his co-workers but at the same time he liked to be recognized as 'number one' in sports medicine. It took some time before he gave appropriate "credit" to his co-workers. In 1983, when volume 17 was in full preparation, Jokl and Hebbelinck had a profound discussion about the name and the future development of the Series. At that time Jokl accepted the proposal to change the name of the Series to "Medicine and Sport Science." Most appropriately he realized that the sport sciences had acquired a discreet identity and content and with this, scientific recognition.

It is fair to say that there have never been conflicts between editors nor authors. Perhaps this is a testimony to the great role models provided by Jokl and Hebbelinck, and of course to the scientific and personal camaraderie. One should also keep in mind that all of the work in the overseeing of the Series has occurred on a voluntary and unpaid basis. The greatest satisfaction for all involved therefore lies in the recognition of the scientific contribution made by authors, editors and series editors alike.

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