

“Ever Forward”: In Memory of the Foundation of *Monatsschrift für Geburtshilfe und Gynaekologie (Monthly Review of Obstetrics and Gynecology)* 125 Years Ago

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The Idea behind the Journal

With the rapid progress of obstetrics as a scientific discipline and the development of gynecology in the middle of the 19th century came the urgent need to exchange knowledge and experience [1–4]. The first scientific societies in the field of obstetrics and gynecology emerged, and the first scientific journals, which fixed and complemented the minutes of scientific meetings, were founded [5–7]. Towards the end of the 19th century, there were three obstetric-gynecological journals in Germany that were considered to be scientific leaders at the time: the *Archiv für Gynäkologie (Archives of Gynecology)*, the *Zeitschrift für Geburtshilfe und Gynäkologie (Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology)*, and the *Centralblatt für Gynäkologie (Central Journal of Gynecology)* [6, 7]. Besides these, there were also numerous specialist publications in the renowned series *Volkmanns Sammlungen klinischer Vorträge (Volkmann’s Collections of Clinical Lectures)* [5]. Still, the founding of a new journal was deemed necessary in order to strike a balance between the very specific and extensive articles in the *Archiv für Gynäkologie* and the short presentations or articles in the *Centralblatt für Gynäkologie*. Therefore, the founders wanted the new journal to become sort of an “all-round-

er”: “We aim to spread the achievements of gynecology as widely as possible – not only among our colleagues, but also among the representatives of other medical disciplines and general practitioners. By reporting all findings from medical subjects that have any relevance to obstetrics and gynecology, we want to preserve and strengthen the connection of our discipline with medicine as a whole. We strive to obtain these reports from those who have achieved outstanding results in their subject as well as in the specific field of reporting. Achievements from abroad, which have so far been presented in a rather unorganized fashion that did little to promote our studies, are to be published either in their original version or in form of summaries written by fellow members of the respective country. We intend to publish excerpts of the negotiations of gynecological societies in Germany and abroad and, if they should choose the ‘*Monatsschrift*’ as their medium of publication, we will publish those negotiations in unabridged form” [5].

August Martin (1847–1933) passed down to us the story of how this new journal, the *Monatsschrift für Geburtshilfe und Gynaekologie (Monthly Review of Obstetrics and Gynecology)*, was founded, and emphasized: “The young publishing bookseller S. Karger put his full expertise and commitment to work” [8]. Samuel Karger (1863–1935;

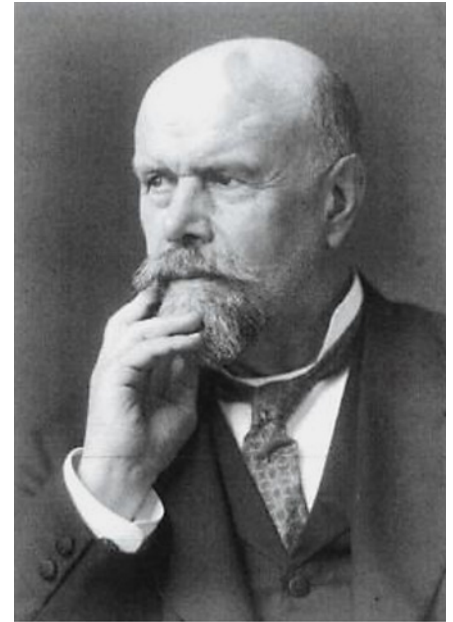


Fig. 1. Samuel Karger, the innovative founder of the S. Karger publishing house, which he managed until his death in 1935. Courtesy of Karger Verlag.



GEORG BROKESCH. LEIPZIG.
Max Saenger - Leipzig

Fig. 2. Max Saenger, co-founder and co-editor of the new obstetric-gynecological journal. Courtesy of Karger Verlag.



A. Martin

Fig. 3. August Martin, founder and editor of the *Monatsschrift für Geburtshilfe und Gynaekologie* until 1933. Courtesy of Karger Verlag.

Fig. 1) had met Max Saenger (1853–1903) and, after also meeting Martin, suggested that the two scientifically very active gynecologists should publish a monthly journal with his publishing company. The project was tempting, but not without risk, since neither Saenger (Fig. 2) nor Martin (Fig. 3) were full professors, that is, directors of university women's hospitals at the time, but only ran well-known private clinics in Leipzig and Berlin, respectively, and both had personal differences with the influential full professors Robert von Olshausen (1835–1915) in Berlin and Paul Zweifel (1848–1927) in Leipzig [8]. Olshausen had received part of his training from Martin's father Eduard A. Martin (1809–1875) and had not gotten along well with him. At one point, he had even left the hospital in Berlin for Halle. Olshausen later apparently transferred this old conflict to August Martin. Saenger, on the other hand, did not belong to the school of Paul Zweifel, successor of Carl Credé (1819–1892), and had to leave the hospital. He founded his own private clinic and thus became Zweifel's immediate competitor in Leipzig. Thus, the situation was difficult: "In light of the strong

influence exerted by the close circle of full professors at German universities, it seemed quite a risk that we, being both lecturers, intended to recruit our colleagues for a scientific publication edited and led by us" [8].

As a result Martin, Saenger, and Karger decided to expand their editorial board and invited Johann Veit (1852–1917) to join them. Veit was a scientifically very active obstetrician and gynecologist, whose name was associated with the then standard textbook "Veit-Stoeckel," but he also intensely courted Olshausen's favor at the time. As Martin recalled: "Saenger, Veit, Karger, and I held our first constituent meeting in my house. We laid out the guidelines and agreed on their further elaboration. We parted by promising, with a handshake, to maintain absolute silence until our first announcement, signed by all of us, would be published" [8].

However, the alliance between the three colleagues quickly fell apart: "The next morning, the first person I met was an assistant of Olshausen, who congratulated me on founding the 'Monatsschrift.' As it turned out, Veit had gone straight from our circle to Olshausen to report

to him. It was decided then that the ‘Monatsschrift’ would be published only by Saenger and me” [8].

They drew up a program for the new journal that was exemplary not only for Germany, but also for England, the USA, France, and Italy [5]. This program was then sent to all German gynecologists as well as numerous internationally known specialists and was largely endorsed by them – only Olshausen, the Berlin full professor, “and a not particularly busy gynecologist in a small town” spoke out against it: “The first issue of the ‘Monatsschrift’ was then published in January 1895” [8].

Among the first contributors to the new journal were well-known gynecologists and obstetricians such as Ahlfeld (Marburg), Bayer (Strasbourg), G. Braun (Vienna), Cholmogoroff (Moscow), Chrobak (Vienna), Dohrn (Königsberg), A. Döderlein (Leipzig), Engström (Helsingfors), Fehling (Halle), Kelly (Baltimore), Kossmann (Berlin), Landau (Berlin), Neugebauer (Warsaw), v. Ott (St. Petersburg), Pawlik (Prague), Pfannenstiel (Wrocław), Rein (Kiev), v. Rosthorn (Prague), Schauta (Vienna), B.S. Schultze (Jena), Simpson (Edinburgh), Slawianski (St. Petersburg), Tauffer (Budapest), v. Winckel (Munich), Wyder (Zurich), and many more [5].

Years later, Martin noted in his memoirs: “It is a heartfelt need of mine to express how this cooperation with Saenger, just as the cooperation with Mr. Karger, has become a source of deep satisfaction for me (...). We met every 1–2 months in Berlin or Leipzig, our discussions were always very harmonious. Saenger and I were like-minded peers in the scientific field, and Mr. Karger knew how to meet our wishes and sometimes quite considerable demands, despite all the difficulties involved” [8].

Looking back, the close cooperation between the two innovative gynecologists August Martin and Max Saenger and their creative publisher Samuel Karger was a stroke of luck for the development of the international publication of gynecological-obstetric scientific research in Germany and in Europe. Even though Martin’s and Saenger’s professional competence was considerable, the *Monatsschrift* would most probably not have come to life without the continuous intellectual and financial commitment of the 32-year-old publishing bookseller Samuel Karger [9, 10].

The Men behind the Journal

August Martin

Eduard August Martin was born on July 14, 1847 in Jena (Thuringia) [11]. His father was Privy Councilor Professor Eduard Arnold Martin (1809–1875), who

taught at the University of Jena and later at the Berlin University Women’s Hospital. At the beginning of his academic career, Martin used his second name August as his first name to distinguish himself from his father and his brother Ernst, who also worked in the academic field. Thus, he went down in medical history as August Martin [12, 13].

From 1866 to 1872, Martin studied medicine in Jena and Berlin, interrupted by a year of voluntary service during the Franco-Prussian War. He obtained his doctorate in 1870, and after passing his state examinations, he was licensed as a physician at the end of January 1872. In his memoirs, August Martin writes about the evening after his last exam: “It was late at night when I got home. I was exhausted and retired to my room, when my father, who was expecting me with a certain unrest, visited and greeted me with a tenderness which was not at all characteristic of his otherwise reserved nature. He was overjoyed and opened a bottle of his magnificent St. Parray Burgundy ... We spent hours intimately chatting about memories and plans for the future; an hour of such intimacy with my father has never returned since then ...” [8].

At his father’s request, Martin went on several study trips to England, Vienna, Prague, and Wrocław. Eduard A. Martin had taken over the management of the Berlin University Women’s Hospital in 1858, and after being granted a special permission by the Ministry regarding their father-son relationship, his son August became assistant doctor at the hospital in September 1872 [8]. After Martin’s father had died of typhoid disease in December 1875, Carl Schröder (1838–1887) took over the management of the hospital. In July 1876, August Martin became *Privatdozent* (private lecturer). Schröder also offered him to stay on even as a private lecturer at the hospital. But Martin’s co-assistants refused to extend his training period beyond the usual 3 years, which would also have involved an increase in salary [8]. August Martin switched to the non-university sector and opened a private clinic, first in Elsassers Straße in Berlin-Mitte, later at Eichendorffstraße 4 [11]. Martin’s memoirs contain a short description of his daily routine during those years: “College early in the morning, 1 h of horseback riding, then working in the clinic, visits to the sick in the city, lunch at 3 o’clock, then consultation hours, followed by a short break, in the evening I regularly went to patients in the clinic or on practice ... From very early on, I had to refrain from participating in longer social pleasures. I usually saw to it that we returned home at 11 o’clock (at night), so that I had 1–2 h left to advance my work ...” [8]. In 1885, Martin had his own hospital built at Elsassers Straße 85 [8, 11].

In his first small private clinic, Martin started holding courses for physicians to give them the opportunity to fill in gaps in their knowledge and to familiarize themselves with state-of-the-art medical practices [8, 11]. August Martin, who was renowned as an exceptionally gifted surgeon far beyond the borders of Berlin, not only showcased examination and surgical techniques on phantoms, but also provided opportunity to watch him perform real surgical operations and thus learn from his techniques.

Martin also published more than 50 essays, monographs, and lectures on various topics of obstetrics. From a historical perspective, his *Kombinierter Handgriff zur Entwicklung des nachfolgenden Kopfes* (combined maneuver for the delivery of the aftercoming head) is worth special mention. This maneuver, known as the “Wigand-Martin-Winckel handle,” or *Dreimännerhandgriff* (three-men handle) for short, is described in older obstetric textbooks and was used in breech births when the fetal head did not enter the lesser pelvis of the mother [14].

August Martin’s goal in life was an academic career as full professor [8]. However, despite his professional expertise and international reputation, it took Martin 15 years to rise from private lecturer to associate professor. In 1899, he simultaneously received two appointments to the universities of Prague and Greifswald. To the astonishment of many of his contemporaries, August Martin accepted the position in the small town of Greifswald in Western Pomerania [8, 11]. During Martin’s time as director, the Greifswald University Women’s Hospital was thoroughly reorganized, modernized, and expanded. In 1902, Martin also founded the *Pommersche Gynäkologische Gesellschaft* (Pomeranian Gynecological Society) [8, 11].

Suffering from the consequences of a dispute with Friedrich Althoff (1839–1908), the “gray eminence” in the Prussian Ministry of Culture, and from his deteriorating state of health, attacks of gout, and increasing deafness, August Martin asked for his dismissal from civil service in 1907 and returned to Berlin. One year later, at the age of 61, Martin ended his medical practice and devoted himself primarily to editing the *Monatsschrift für Geburtshilfe und Gynaekologie*.

On the occasion of August Martin’s 70th birthday in 1917, an entire issue of the *Monatsschrift* was dedicated to him. This commemorative publication contained contributions by Martin’s students, friends, and two of his sons as well as a directory of his more than 500 publications [13]. After this big celebration, Martin, now almost completely deaf, withdrew with his wife to Ratzeburg, where his daughter lived, and from then on mainly

worked as a writer. In his 1924 autobiography *Werden und Wirken eines deutschen Frauenarztes (Education and Professional Activity of a German Gynecologist)* [8], he vividly describes half a century of German and international developments in gynecology from his own point of view, stating in his preface: “My children and friends have suggested to me to write down these life memories. Mr. S. Karger, whose devoted friendship by far surpasses a single man’s lifetime, has assisted me in this endeavor” [8].

In the last years of his life, Martin suffered repeated strokes, which he overcame each time, until he eventually died on November 26, 1933 after suffering another seizure. On the occasion of his death, Walter Stoeckel wrote: “With August Martin, we bury a glorious period in our profession ... May the future bestow upon us men who achieve as much as he did ...” [12].

Max Saenger

Max Saenger was born on March 14, 1853 in Bayreuth [15]. After attending the secondary school in his home town and graduating from high school, he studied medicine in Würzburg and Leipzig from 1871 to 1876. In 1876, he received his license to practice as a physician and obstetrician and obtained his doctorate with his thesis on *Die Mechanik der Broncho- und Pneumorrhagien bei Tuberculosis pulmonum (The Mechanics of Broncho- and Pneumorrhagia in Tuberculosis pulmonum)*. Saenger remained an assistant at the Institute of Pathology and at the medical polyclinic under Ernst Leberecht Wagner (1929–1888) until 1878. From 1878 to 1881, Max Saenger was an assistant at the hospital of Carl Siegmund Franz Credé (1819–1892), where he became *Privatdozent* (private lecturer) in obstetrics and gynecology in 1881 with his paper *Der Kaiserschnitt bei Uterusfibromen nebst comparative Methodik der Sectio caesarea und Porro-Operation (The Caesarean Section with Uterine Fibromas, and Comparative Methodology of the Sectio caesarea and Porro’s Operation)* [15]. This paper as well as a number of other publications contributed to improving the technique of sutural closure of the uterus and indirectly led to the organ-preserving “conservative” method of the Caesarean section prevailing over Porro’s operation, thus avoiding craniotomy and embryotomy of the living child in the case of relative indication [16, 17]. Saenger also earned merits in the field of surgical gynecology, for which he was ideally suited due to his pathological-anatomical background. In 1881, Credé, his esteemed superior at the University Women’s Hospital, had promoted him to “official surgeon” of the hospital, a position Saenger held until 1887. In the early 1880s, Saenger per-

formed the largest gynecological surgeries of his time, such as a total vaginal extirpation of the uterus, as well as complex “coeliotomies” in the case of inflammatory adnexal diseases. For these purposes, he used the methods of modern asepsis or antisepsis, which he constantly questioned and improved [15, 17]. Saenger made intensive use of scientific travels and congress visits in order to gain inspiration from all fields of medicine, especially pathological anatomy, internal medicine, and neurology, intending to use them in his own work. He was considered to be extremely well-read, innovative, and scientifically up to date [17]. In 1887, after C.S.F. Credé had retired, the renowned Swiss gynecologist and obstetrician Paul Zweifel (1848–1927) was appointed full professor to Leipzig by the Friedrich-Alexander University of Erlangen. This also marked the end of Saenger’s successful career at the Leipzig University Women’s Hospital, but he remained scientifically connected to it as an associate professor from 1890 to 1899 [15, 17].

Saenger then took over a private clinic set up in rented apartments from Credé’s son-in-law Christian Gerhard Leopold (1846–1911). In 1890, however, he was able to open a state-of-the-art women’s clinic with 25 beds and two laboratories for histological and bacteriological examinations and studies. This private clinic soon competed with the University Women’s Hospital, which did nothing to improve Paul Zweifel’s relationship with Saenger, a fact that Martin had referred to earlier [8, 15]. Still, in recognition of his scientific and academic achievements, Max Saenger was appointed associate professor at Leipzig University at the end of 1890. From 1894 to 1895, Saenger was also actively involved in moving forward the idea of a new journal, in preparing its foundation and in finally publishing the *Monatsschrift für Geburtshilfe und Gynaekologie* [8]. Martin described Saenger’s profound contribution to the monthly’s editorial work as follows: “Being vividly interested in all endeavors in our field, he rigorously sifted through what was submitted to us, pushed forward the good and relentlessly rejected the inferior. Binding in his manners, he knew how to be objective, courageous, and energetic in all controversies that naturally occurred during the history of the ‘Monatsschrift.’ Loyal and true, strict to himself, he was always ready to consider the reasons of others and did not close himself to their legitimacy. When we worked together, ... he was always diligent and supportive, tirelessly following every suggestion and evaluating its true value, in order to then express it appropriately in the ‘Monatsschrift’” [15].

Max Saenger was very popular among his colleagues in Leipzig. He was repeatedly appointed chairman or

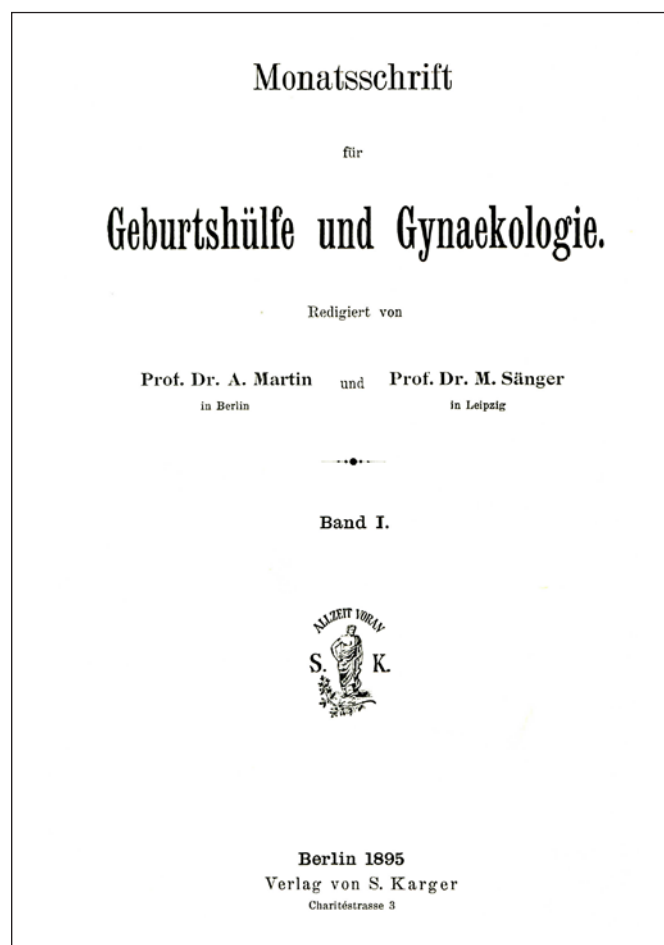


Fig. 4. Cover page of volume I with the groundbreaking logo *Allzeit voran* (Ever forward).

vice-chairman of the *Leipziger Gesellschaft für Geburtshilfe und Gynäkologie* (Leipzig Society for Obstetrics and Gynecology; est. 1854) and was also elected a member or honorary member of numerous national and international scientific associations. In 1897, Saenger received the title of Royal Saxon Medical Councilor [15, 17]. His sense of humor was appreciated in social gatherings and in the circle of his family, and his sense of art, his understanding of music, and his knowledge of languages were equally admired among friends and colleagues. August Martin later wrote about his friend: “Apart from his admirable versatility, ... in the critical evaluation of Saenger’s rich legacy ... the following two outstanding qualities, which characterized all of his work, deserve to be emphasized in particular: the absolute reliability of his observations and his unparalleled thoroughness. In our age of literary overproduction, in which the desire has become

dominant to bring perfunctory observations to market as quickly as possible, these two qualities strike us as particularly beneficial and pleasant” [17].

Similar to Martin, who at the age of 52 accepted an appointment to the small University of Greifswald and left his renowned and established private clinic in Berlin in 1899, Saenger’s friends were equally surprised when he followed a call to be appointed full professor and director of the obstetric-gynecological clinic at the German Charles University in Prague the same year. Martin explained this as follows: “The fact that he allowed himself to be pulled away from his quite unusual position as a researcher and scholar, teacher, physician, and colleague by the magnetic force of the chair in Prague corresponded to his innermost wish to devote himself equally to gynecology and to obstetrics; and it is only the professorship at a German university that offers such an opportunity. The success he achieved in both disciplines during his short period of time in Prague is proof of how Saenger, convinced that the two branches of our profession belong together, knew how to master them both” [15, 17].

Max Saenger, the congenial co-founder of the *Monatsschrift* 125 years ago, will be remembered as a creative innovator in the fields of gynecology and obstetrics. His method of sutural closure of the uterus following Caesarean sections was groundbreaking [16, 17]. Saenger died after a serious illness on January 12, 1903 in Bubeneč near Prague [15, 17].

The First Issue in Volume One

The first volume of the *Monatsschrift* appeared in January 1895 and contained six issues. Including the bibliography, it consisted of 667 pages in total. Its cover centrally features the logo of the Karger publishing house: a depiction of Aesculapius with Samuel Karger’s motto *Allzeit voran* (Ever forward) (Fig. 4). In addition to a detailed history of German gynecological journals, which is well

worth reading, and the program of the *Monatsschrift* by A. Martin and M. Saenger, the first issue with 93 pages contained papers by F. Schauta on the surgical therapy of vesicovaginal fistulas, by P.J. Möbius on hysteria, and by M. Saenger on conception through an accessory tubenostium.

With these contributions, the editors expressly met the specifications set forth in their program [5]: Apart from the surgical-technical topic of vesicovaginal fistulas and the reproductive-obstetric manuscript by Saenger, which were of interest at that time, it was above all the controversial work of the Leipzig psychiatrist Paul Julius Möbius (1853–1907) [18] on the much-discussed problem of hysteria, its causes and treatment options, which still accounts for the medical-historical value of the first issue of the *Monatsschrift* today.

In addition to these longer contributions, the first issue also featured shorter reports and overviews of the gynecological section of the 66th Assembly of German Natural Scientists and Physicians (v. Rosthorn, Prague), the latest publications on gonorrhoea (G. Klein, Munich), the latest Polish specialist literature (L. Neugebauer, Warsaw), and articles on chlorosis as well as on “gynecological and general surgical” topics from the 1894 Surgeons’ Congress (From, Leipzig). The first issue concludes with two book reviews and a comprehensive bibliography of the current literature of its time. All in all, the first issue was a very successful start for the new journal. Since its beginning in 1895, the *Monatsschrift* has developed into a leading specialist journal in the field of gynecology and obstetrics. After several name changes, it is now known as *Gynecologic and Obstetric Investigation* and still plays an important role in the canon of international scientific publications today [9, 10, 19].

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors state that they have no conflict of interest.

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