

# Preface

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**Key words:** insulin centenary, Banting and Best, insulin, diabetes, Theresa May, Marjorie the dog

Following a timely reminder from Rury Holman, on 24 November 2020 I sent an email to the ABCD executive, past ABCD chairmen and several ABCD Trustees pointing out that January 11, 2022 would be 100 years to the day since insulin was first given to a human: “On 11 January 1922, Leonard Thompson, a 14-year-old boy with diabetes, who lay dying at the Toronto General Hospital, was given the first injection of insulin. However, the extract was so impure that Thompson suffered a severe allergic reaction, and further injections were cancelled. Over the next 12 days, James Collip worked day and night to improve the ox-pancreas extract, and a second dose was injected on the 23 January. This was completely successful, not only in having no obvious side-effects, but in completely eliminating the glycosuria sign of diabetes”.<sup>1</sup>

We were in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic at the time I sent the email, but I pointed out: “by January 2022 we should all have been vaccinated to bits and COVID should hopefully be confined to history. I suggest ABCD at once books the Royal College of Physicians for an ABCD centenary meeting of this great occasion in the history of diabetes. If we can’t get January 11 we could go for January 23 – not sure which of the two dates is the most important as the day of breakthrough. We should then set about advertising the date and promoting it as going to be the greatest ABCD meeting ever”!

There was universal approval for this idea within ABCD. Throughout 2021, during the various lockdowns of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2022), we were in the period 100 years since the momentous events recounted by the Toronto historian, Michael Bliss.<sup>2</sup> We were determined, after such a prolonged period without face-to-face meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic, that this meeting should be face-to-face. After much consideration we decided that January 11th, 2022 would be the optimum date, being exactly 100 years to the day since that first injection of insulin into Leonard Thompson.<sup>1</sup>

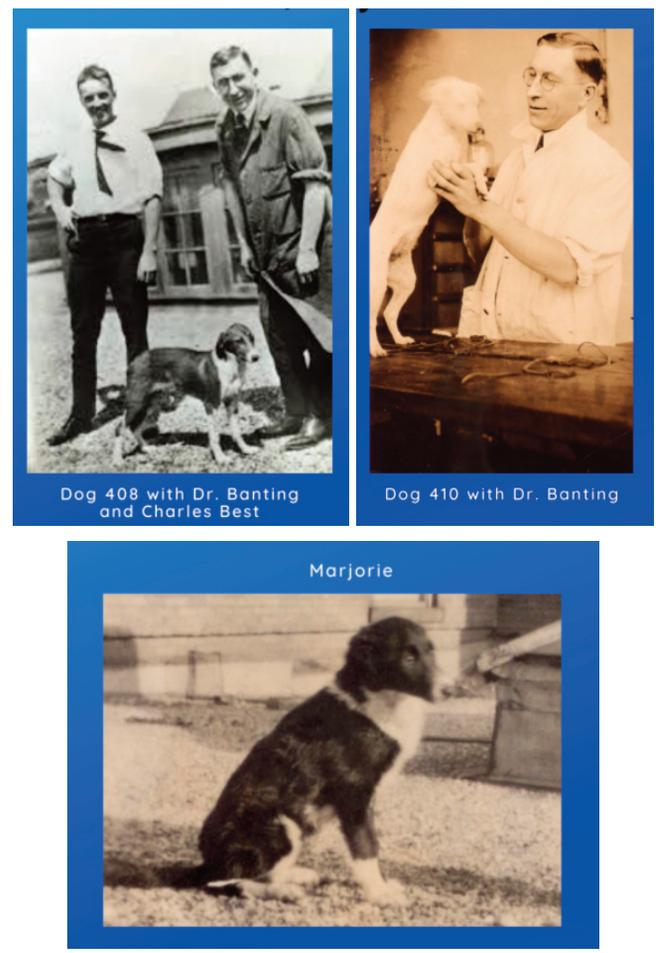
We planned to have speakers covering all the 100 years of insulin, discussing the massive improvements in the care of people

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**Figure 1.** The dogs who helped with the discovery of insulin<sup>3</sup>



with diabetes that resulted from that initial spark. As we considered the subjects and the speakers the programme grew, and it became clear that the meeting was going to be a two-day event. We envisaged the event occurring at the Royal College of Physicians, with dinner in the evening. We were pleased that the former prime minister Lady Theresa May, herself a person with type 1 diabetes, agreed to be our guest at the dinner and to propose the toast to ‘Banting, Best, Collip, MacCleod and Marjorie’, with Marjorie representing the many dogs on whom Banting and Best tried their pancreatic extracts as they attempted to find a preparation that would work (Figure 1).<sup>3</sup> Lady May had done much for our cause through campaigning,<sup>4</sup> and the well-known picture of her openly wearing FreeStyle Libre (Figure 2).

**Figure 2.** Theresa May, the former Prime Minister, wearing FreeStyle Libre<sup>4</sup>



As 2021 progressed into the autumn, it did seem that the pandemic was subsiding to the extent that such a meeting could occur on January 11th and indeed the College and accommodation were booked, all the speakers signed up and everything was in place. Unfortunately, with just a month to go, in December 2021, the Omicron variant of Sars-Cov-2 emerged and with a new and rapidly spreading wave of infections, we realised that the event on January 11th had to be postponed. Another date some months later was sought when there was availability at the College and finally we settled on July 4th and 5th, 2022.

In the end the event proved to be highly successful, with places in the auditorium at the College and at the dinner oversubscribed. We were delighted that Theresa May and her husband, Sir Philip, were able to join us (Figure3) and the toast did occur. We were also delighted, in the wake of such a successful event, that all the speakers agreed to write up their presentations for a special supplement of the British Journal of Diabetes. We are gratified that this was achieved during 2022, thanks in no small part to the combined

efforts of Jen Atkinson and Helen Jones leading the BJD production department.

The programme of the actual event that took place on July 4-5, 2022 can be viewed online;<sup>5</sup> the contents pages of this supplement are slightly different, mostly because the authors of the supplement altered their titles slightly in many cases to suit the subjects' communication in written form. All the presentations (slides and recordings of the speakers) can also be viewed online.<sup>6</sup>

I would like to convey my sincere thanks to all the speakers who helped make it the greatest ABCD meeting ever, to Red Hot Irons for superb organisational support, to the attendees for coming and for their enthusiastic participation, to ABCD chair, Dr Dipesh Patel, for rescuing my wallet which I had left in the room-safe in Meliá White House Hotel, to Theresa and Philip May for joining us at the dinner, but most of all to Banting, Best, Collip, MacCleid ... and Marjorie.

**Conflict of interest** REJR has received speaker fees, and/or consultancy fees and/or educational sponsorships from BioQuest, GI Dynamics and Novo Nordisk.

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### References

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**Figure 3.** Theresa May and her husband, Sir Philip, at the dinner. **a**, left to right, Dr Bob Ryder (pages S2, S23, S36, S82, S100), Dr Dipesh Patel (ABCD chair), Theresa and Philip May, Dr Barbara McGowan (page S62), Dr Umesh Dashora (ABCD Honorary Meeting Secretary), Prof Ken Shaw (page S13), Dr Vijay Jayagopal (ABCD Honorary Treasurer), Dr Richard Greenwood (Founder member of ABCD, first Honorary Secretary, former ABCD chair). **b**, left to right, Sir Philip May, Dr Alistair Lumb (DTN-UK Deputy Chair), Dr Emma Wilmot (pages S79, S82, S100), Theresa May, Prof Pratik Choudhary (page S69).

