

IUPHAR 9th INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF PHARMACOLOGY – LONDON 1984

The British Pharmacological Society and its Journals

The British Pharmacological Society was founded in 1931. In 1933 three of its members were nominated to serve as editors on the *Journal of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics*, published by the American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics. The American Journal thus became a major outlet for papers from British pharmacologists as their new Society began to find its feet.

By 1946 a separate journal for the British Society was clearly needed and an arrangement with the British Medical Association allowed the publication of a quarterly journal called the *British Journal of Pharmacology and Chemotherapy*. The first issue appeared despite difficulties arising from post-war shortages of newsprint; it included a Preface by H.H. Dale and was compiled by a small Editorial Board under the Chairmanship of J.H. Gaddum, with H.R. Ing as Secretary.

The first volume covered twelve months of publications and contained 28 papers occupying 287 pages, with an average publication time of about 4.3 months. The Journal began quickly to acquire an international reputation with a steady rise in the number of papers submitted. In order to deal with the increase in submissions, the Journal was published bi-monthly from 1961 and then monthly from 1966.

In 1968, publication of the Journal was taken over by Macmillan Journals Ltd. The title was shortened to *British Journal of Pharmacology* and blue colouring was introduced on to the cover. It was also in 1968 that the Society decided to introduce abstracts of the communications and demonstrations given at its meetings and these were included in the Journal from that time.

To foster a growing interest in clinical pharmacology, a Clinical Section of the Society was formed in 1970 and in 1974 a second journal, the *British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology*, was published by the Society through Macmillan Journals Ltd. To mark this important occasion the cover of the established Journal was changed to its present design and that of the Clinical Journal was made identical except in colour.

Since their origin, both Journals have grown steadily in size, circulation and, necessarily, in administrative complexity. The *British Journal of Pharmacology*, for instance, now has an Editorial Board of forty-three editors in Great Britain, twenty corresponding editors in twelve other countries, a Chairman, Secretary, Press Editor and Assistant Press Editor, together with a fully-staffed office, currently in the University

of Aberdeen, to maintain the Journal. In the year ending 30th June 1983, 454 full papers were submitted to the Journal, 58% of these originating from outside the U.K., and 275 papers were published (a ten-fold increase on the first year of publication) with an average publication time of 7.6 months. The Journal also publishes Short Communications when the work seems to warrant priority publication (average publication time 3.9 months in 1983) and twenty-two of these, covering a wide range of topics, were published in 1983.

The Editorial Board seeks continually to improve the Journal and to keep publication time to a minimum. The latter has been significantly reduced as a result of a recent decision to remove the abstracts of the Proceedings of Society Meetings from the main issues and to publish them in separate volumes.

Despite the proliferation of competing journals over the past twenty years, it is pleasing that the *British Journal of Pharmacology* has been able to maintain its high scientific reputation among pharmacologists as judged by the steadily increasing submission rate from home and abroad and by the size of the circulation which currently stands at about 2800.

The Society is proud too of its younger offspring the Clinical Journal, which has become an internationally-renowned vehicle for publication of papers in clinical pharmacology; an especially popular feature being the Symposium supplements.

It is instructive to look back at volumes which appeared in the first 20 years of the Journal's existence and to find how many internationally acknowledged landmarks in the progress of pharmacology were reported for the first time in the Journal. The first volume contained a description by Bülbring (1946) of the rat isolated phrenic nerve-diaphragm preparation and, in the following year, Schild (1947) introduced the pA scale for the measurement of drug antagonism. In 1954, Gaddum described the technique of superfusion (Gaddum, 1953) which was fundamental to the bioassay of vasoactive humoral agents used by Vane (1964) and which subsequently led to the award of the 1982 Nobel Prize for Medicine. About three years later Stephenson (1956) published his modification of receptor theory of drug action and Paton (1957) described his experiments on the action of morphine using the coaxially-stimulated guinea-pig ileum. Another early step in the discovery of opiate receptors was published by Kosterlitz & Robinson (1958) and this led on to the identification of the endogenous peptide ligands for

these receptors. In 1960 Burn and Rand first outlined their ideas on a cholinergic link in sympathetic transmission and quantitative aspects of transmitter uptake mechanisms were first described in 1963 by Iversen.

This list is necessarily selective because, in the twenty years to 1965, many other key papers appeared that had an important bearing on the progress of pharmacology. Furthermore, in the past twenty years there has been no diminution in the appearance of important papers in the Journal and, while they mostly have not yet had the chance to stand the full test of time, many of them have already had great influence on the world of pharmacology.

The papers contained in this Congress issue are typical of the Journal today in the way that they cover a wide range of topics and originate from many different countries.

It is the hope of the British Pharmacological Society that this international flavour of its Journals will always be strong and that they will continue to flourish and promote progress in all aspects of pharmacology.

May 1984

J.F. Mitchell
(Chairman, Editorial Board,
British Journal of Pharmacology)

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