

The 40th Anniversary of the publication of the British Journal of Pharmacology (and Chemotherapy)

The first issue of the *British Journal of Pharmacology and Chemotherapy*, as it was then called, was published in March 1946 and now, exactly 40 years later, the current issue of the Journal celebrates this important event.

In this Anniversary issue we reproduce from Volume 1, the Title page, the Contents pages and the Foreword, written by Sir Henry Dale in his customarily perceptive manner. In addition to a normal complement of scientific articles, we also include an appreciation of the founding Secretary, Dr H.R. Ing and the Third Report on the Organization of Pharmacology in Great Britain, prepared for the British Pharmacological Society by Y.S. Bakhle, I.K.M. Morton, D.W. Straughan and R.A. Webster.

In his Foreword to the first issue it will be seen that Sir Henry outlined the sequence of events which led to the establishment of a Journal which was devoted to pharmacology and which was edited and published in Britain. The way in which this Journal developed, altered and thrived in the forty years that followed has recently been described (Mitchell, J.F., (1984). *Br. J. Pharmac.*, 82, 545–546). The circulation has now grown to about 2800 and last year the journal published 319 full papers compared to the 28 papers carried in Volume 1. Over half the papers accepted last year came from overseas and this well emphasises the international appeal that the Journal has achieved. However, it is not the quantity of papers that matters to a Journal and to its readers, it is the scientific quality which is of prime importance for a journal's health and reputation. This is hard to measure but the Science Citation Index provides one guide and it is most pleasing to find that in 1983, when 126 Journals concerned with Pharmacology or Pharmacy were ranked by citation impact factor, the *British Journal of Pharmacology* came fourth in this long list, preceded only by review journals (*A. Rev. Pharmac.*, *Pharmac. Rev.* and *Rev. Physiol. Biochem. Pharmac.*), a most noteworthy achievement.

Another way of judging the scientific calibre of a journal is to consider the work it has published that has subsequently come to be regarded as classic or has set new trends in the subject. *The British Journal of Pharmacology* must pass this test in the eyes of even its most harsh critics. A glance at the reproduced contents pages from Volume 1 are alone sufficient to make this point, for there we find descriptions of the analgesic action of pethidine derivatives, the chemotherapeutic

action of dyes, the phrenic nerve diaphragm preparation, substitutes for quinidine, analgesic activity assessment, automatic assay apparatus, estimation of barbiturates and the properties of myanesin. This high quality of papers is not confined to Volume 1 but continues through the years to current issues. However, because more recent papers have yet to be tested by time, it is harder to be certain of their quality but nevertheless, in every issue it is possible to find papers whose novelty is quite clear and where important new principles or facts are described. In just three recent months (June, July, August 1985) the Journal has, amongst other important studies, carried exciting papers of considerable originality covering such diverse subjects as muscarinic receptor differentiation, central prostaglandin actions, antigen modification of epithelia, opioid inhibition of synaptic transmission, selective monoamine oxidase inhibitors, β -adrenoceptor subtype locations and the actions of carbacyclin and doperamine. It is articles such as these which have placed, and keep, the Journal in the forefront of pharmacological literature.

Such buoyancy in the affairs of the Journal must, at least in part, be a reflection of the continuing development of pharmacology and the importance of pharmacological discoveries throughout the scientific world, a phenomenon which Sir Henry, in his Foreword, makes clear was in progress as long as 40 years ago. It must also reflect the health of pharmacology in Britain where, despite the continuing financial problems faced by Universities, Research Councils and other public institutions, the output of published work appears not to diminish. This situation has undoubtedly been greatly helped by the role of the pharmaceutical industry with its imaginative and varied support of both basic and applied pharmacological research. This is well illustrated in the Report on the Organization of Pharmacology which also provides valuable data showing the expansion of British pharmacology over the years.

No journal such as ours can succeed without a highly competent team of dedicated people, many of them busy and active pharmacologists, to run the editorial office and the processing of manuscripts. Equally important are the Editors and Referees whose high scientific calibre and selfless work are so vital to the health and reputation of the Journal. All these people give generously of their time for no material reward and the British Pharmacological Society owes

them a considerable debt of gratitude.

The success of a journal is also dependent on the quality of its publisher. We have been fortunate that, since 1968, Macmillan Press Ltd. has served our interests well and has played a significant part in the reduction of the average publication time to the satisfactory figure of 7.7 months for full papers.

With such expertise and goodwill available to the Journal, and with the rising number of excellent manuscripts being submitted from all parts of the world, it is not hard to be optimistic about the future of the *British Journal of Pharmacology* and its place in the pharmacological literature.

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