

EDITORIAL

BJP goes online after 66 years on paper

John C McGrath

BJP Editor in Chief, School of Life Sciences, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK

Correspondence

John C McGrath, School of Life
Sciences, Wolfson Link Building,
University of Glasgow, Glasgow
G12 8QQ, UK. E-mail:
ian.mcgrath@glasgow.ac.uk

This editorial marks the first issue of *British Journal of Pharmacology* that will not be published on paper since the *British Journal of Pharmacology and Chemotherapy* was first published in 1946. We are now 'online-only'.

Our first paper was 'Analgesic action of pethidine derivatives and related compounds' by MacDonald *et al.* (1946) from The University of Manchester and Roche Products. It evidently had an international distribution since the scanned online version in PubMed is stamped 'University of Arkansas, School of Medicine, Library'!

This article was about testing compounds for analgesic activity on a mouse model, stating 'there is reasonable agreement between estimates of efficiency [sic*], relative to other drugs, on mice and men', a line that must have given some satisfaction when submitted on 17 August 1945, 8 years after the publication of Steinbeck's novel 'Of Mice and Men' (Steinbeck, 1937) and for this Scottish editor at least, the pleasure of being on the 160th anniversary of national poet Robert Burns' inspiration for Steinbeck's title 'The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men Gang aft agley' (Burns, 1785). Given the efficient postal system of the day, it is also likely that the manuscript was posted the day after the official date in the UK of the end of the Second World War (15 August 1945).

The subject of the article is of enduring importance and nicely encapsulates three things: the pharmacological approach to drug discovery, collaboration between academic and industrial scientists and bridges between basic and clinical research. These enduring aspects of research are illustrated by an article on assessment of analgesics, which will be published, by coincidence, in our first online-only volume, and is already online (see Oertel and Lötsch, 2012).

In a fine example of prescience, MacDonald *et al.* concluded 'Extensions of this work are planned in the hope that facts will emerge which will provide for a maturer judgment on the relationship of chemical constitution to analgesic value'. And so it proved! MacDonald *et al.* (1946) showed that experiments with mice could select within a chemical series for analgesic potential, while Oertel and Lötsch (2012) show

that experiments with human volunteers can refine the choice of analgesics for use in human patients, completing the translation from chemistry, via research with animals, to humans.

We are going online-only because that is how people now read the journal. By freeing the format from paper, the journal can be enriched with technological improvements such as hyperlinks and can be read in different formats on different devices. Developments to enable these will follow in the course of this year.

A significant improvement will be the ability to link directly to the online resource <http://www.guidetopharmacology.org>, which has been created in a collaboration between the British Pharmacological Society (BPS) and the International Union of Basic and Clinical Pharmacology (IUPHAR), as a free-to-access 'one-stop shop' source of information on drug targets and the prescription medicines and experimental drugs that act on them. The Guide is intended to support researchers and students in pharmacology and drug discovery, and also provides the general public with accurate information on the basic science underlying drug action. In 2012, the Wellcome Trust joined BPS and IUPHAR as funders of The Guide, when a generous grant of £551 750 was announced. We will be rolling out links from individual journal articles to The Guide in the course of the year (see also Alexander *et al.*, 2012).

References

- Alexander SP, Benson HE, Davenport A, Mathie A, McGrath IJ, Pawson AJ *et al.* (2012). GuideToPharmacology.org – an update. *Br J Pharmacol* 167: 697–698.
- Burns R (1785). To a Mouse, on Turning Her Up in Her Nest with the Plough' Kilmarnock Edition. Available at: <http://www.robertburns.org/works/75.shtml> (accessed 6 December 2012).
- MacDonald AD, Woolfe G, Bergel F, Morrison AL, Rinderknecht H (1946). Analgesic action of pethidine derivatives and related compounds. *Br J Pharmacol Chemother* 1: 4–14.
- Oertel BG, Lötsch J (2012). Clinical pharmacology of analgesics assessed with human experimental pain models: bridging basic and clinical research. *Br J Pharmacol*. doi: 10.1111/bph.12023 (in press).
- Steinbeck J (1937). *Of mice and men*. Penguin Books 2007. Covici Friede, United States. See also <http://www.readanybook.com/ebook/of-mice-and-men-242>.

*footnote for terminology sticklers: the authors did mean 'efficiency'; they use this in a sentence summarizing earlier work. In their own paper, analgesic activity is defined as the ratio of the dose of a compound to produce a given effect relative to the dose of pethidine; this ratio is probably what they mean by 'efficiency'.