

## Editorial

# The fuzzy boundaries of pharmaceutical sciences

Bernard Testa<sup>1</sup>

*Institut de Chimie Therapeutique, Universite de Lausanne, Geneva–Lausanne School of Pharmacy, CH-1015, Lausanne, Switzerland*

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The *International Journal of Pharmaceutics* has a long history of growth both qualitative and quantitative. Under the devoted leadership of Professor Patrick D'Arcy, the Journal has rapidly created for itself a unique niche in the pharmaceutical sciences. The reasons of this success are obvious to anyone who keeps a regular eye on our professional literature, and all these reasons have quality as their common denominator. Quality in the presentation and layout of the Journal, obviously, but also and foremost quality in content.

The content of any journal has at least two dimensions, namely breadth and depth. Both are essential (etymological sense) components of its quality, and both emanate from a fathomless network of factors among which the personality of the editors and their collaboration with authors are hardly recognized. Depth in content, the hallmark of any good scientific work, will not be discussed further here. In contrast, it may be worth reflecting on the range of disciplines that can rightly be considered to belong to pharmaceutical sciences, and hence may define the breadth in coverage of a

generalist medium such as the *International Journal of Pharmaceutics*.

Pharmaceutical sciences appear nowhere explicitly in the long list of disciplines spanning mathematics, physics, chemistry, biochemistry, molecular biology, cellular biology, anatomy and physiology, etc. Pharmaceutical sciences are classified in a separate list, tightly interconnected around a unifying banner named the 'pharmakon'. Today however, various centrifugal trends can be felt that advocate an evolution of the 'pharmaceutical' sciences to become more computational, physical or biomedical, and less directly connected with bioactive agents.

This is precisely where major pharmaceutical journals have a leading role to play by holding fast to a broad but not too broad coverage. Anybody can see that the exclusion of some important aspects of pharmaceutical research may do harm to a generalist journal. The damage done by opening a pharmaceutical journal to papers with only a far-stretched or indiscernible connection with drugs may be just as real in the long term. To maintain a proper focus is the challenge faced by all journal editors, but to prevent the 'pharmaceutical' sciences from losing their unique specificity and character is our common responsibility.

<sup>1</sup> Professor Bernard Testa, has been a long-serving member of the editorial board of the journal. The editor-in-chief (Europe) asked retiring members of the board for editorial comments. This is Professor Testa's.