



## Editorial

# Historical perspectives

It is my impression that many young scientists have little appreciation of the history of the development of their subject, so concerned are they by the latest paper or articles in press. Bibliographies supporting published papers now rarely cite the progenitor papers, and authors often forget the difference between primary and secondary sources, citing the most recent review when first referring to a topic. In this way, the early papers are forgotten, and the true history of invention or discovery is lost, along perhaps with some perspective.

This lack of feeling for the development of subjects was exacerbated by the fact that early electronic databases did not contain papers written before the 1980s, and this has fuelled a peculiar belief amongst life scientists that anything published before they were born could not be relevant today. It is refreshing to find that this is being remedied and that one can probe ScienceDirect, for example, and download the first and all the subsequent issues of *The Lancet* – from 1823 onwards. This in itself is a mine of historical insights. The *International Journal of Pharmaceutics* has a shorter history, but its first issue in February 1978 and other early issues would repay revisiting.

Those of us who have ploughed our furrows for a long period also note in the literature papers being published today on topics which were the subject of research in the 1960s and 70s, the same issues, the same problems probed with new techniques of course, but usually reaching the same conclusions. The lack of references to the earlier literature confuses the history of progression.

As one who has always been fascinated by old texts which are frequently extremely perceptive, it seemed to be valuable to ask experts to review the recent history of their fields. The first such historical perspective is published in this issue and has been penned by Jonathan Hadgraft and Majella Lane (Hadgraft and Lane, 2005). Jonathan Hadgraft has a familial connection with the subject's history. His late father carried out early studies at the Royal Free Hospital in London on transdermal absorption. My own first contact with the subject was as a student in Glasgow where one of my teachers, D.H.O. Gemmell, carried out early research on the penetration of drugs through the skin. This awakened my interest in research in drug delivery and physical pharmacy, although in a different direction.

If readers are interested in submitting historical perspectives on any subject within the scope of the journal, the editors would be happy to consider them for publication, so that the fascinating history of pharmaceutics in its widest sense can be assembled and appreciated.

## Reference

- Hadgraft, J., Lane, M., 2005. Skin permeation: the years of enlightenment. *Int. J. Pharm.* 305, 2–12.

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