Editorial

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This special issue of *Journal of Materials Science: Materials in Medicine* is a selection of the 55 papers presented at the 12th European Conference on Biomaterials, held in Oporto from 10–13 September 1995. Papers which could not be included in this special issue due to space availability will appear in future issues.

The papers were selected by Professor David Williams, to whom I am grateful for carrying out the evaluation in a short period of time. I am also indebted to Professor William Bonfield for his constant assistance and advice. Without their collaboration these papers would not have been published so shortly after the conference.

One aspect I am particularly pleased about is the fact that the acceptance procedures currently followed by the journal were also used in this issue. This gives authors the guarantee that high scientific standards were used in the evaluation of their work. This was the last hurdle in a process that involved the evaluation of 253 abstracts by a panel of 79 international experts.

I hope that readers will appreciate the originality and scientific relevance of these works. They reflect the enormous progress that biomaterials has made in recent years. The area is becoming increasingly inter- and multi-disciplinary, and is giving researchers involved the opportunity to raise new questions generally and in their own areas of expertise. In fact, new approaches in materials engineering and cell biology have been made possible by this fascinating new field of research. However, the opening of new avenues has also brought greater complexity to the processes involved in biomaterials development and to the manufacturing of medical devices.

In spite of the need to develop new materials and devices to replace the vast majority of unnatural and not-so-smart-materials, we have to realise that the introduction of new products to the market is a process which consumes a great deal of time and resources. Striking social differences between advanced and developing countries will also limit world-wide dissemination of more human-friendly biomaterials. Adequate clinical practices, together with strict quality control and product improvement, will be essential components for increased implant reliability. Advanced and traditional materials can all be part of our efforts to improve the quality of life for millions of people, provided we leave enough room for creative and honest scientific work.

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