

Editorial

The *Journal of Pharmacy and Pharmacology* first appeared in January 1949, when the *Quarterly Journal and Year Book of Pharmacy* became a monthly research journal. The event was noted in neither the expiring *Quarterly* nor the aspiring *Monthly*. In the forty-four years since, the *Journal* has had only four Editors and this remarkable reticence has continued. Like Poet Laureates, the Editors of this *Journal* have spoken only on great occasions. The first such was when the second Editor, George Brownlee penned the obituary of the first Editor, Charles Hampshire in 1955. Charles had been Editor for six years but had of course been Editor of the *Quarterly* for many years before that. The transition from George Brownlee, happily due to George's retirement, to his assistant John Fowler would only be noted by a close scrutiny of the title pages for 1972 and the next pronouncement from this Office was when the present Editor prevailed on John Fowler to write a "Valete" on his retirement in February 1991. The title caused some discussion on our half-remembered Latin—editors love to do this, by the way—to decide whether the form was correct, and I hope we made the right choice. This could well have been followed with an "Avete" in a following edition, but given the history of this *Journal*, that would have seemed to have been rather garrulous.

One of John Fowler's parting shots was to quote George Brownlee: "this is an experimental *Journal*—so experiment!". Undoubtedly, the *Journal* has moved with the times in its coverage of new topics in pharmaceutical sciences and in new ways to present research papers. However, a striking feature of the early issues of the *Journal* is to illustrate the old saying that there is nothing new under the sun. Some of the titles at least could appear in research journals today and certainly the ideas and philosophies of researchers nearly half a century ago are still worth reading, even if they did not have the technology available to their present-day counterparts.

It does appear strange that, almost alone amongst learned *Journals* published by professional societies, the *Journal of Pharmacy and Pharmacology* has never included an Editorial other than the two mentioned above. Perhaps those of us who spend much of our time attempting to correct others in the use of English or the correct scientific terms are not so keen to leave ourselves open to similar criticism. Nevertheless, I propose to open 1993 by establishing this Editor's page primarily to provide a facility for the Editor to communicate with the *Journal's* readers and authors on such things as *Journal* policy and directions and to raise and discuss scientific issues, particularly those written about in the research papers in the *Journal*.

Before the publication of most research papers in learned *Journals*, there is a rigorous refereeing procedure. Nobody

would disagree with the need for a peer-refereed system, particularly in these days when detailed knowledge of every facet of a particular science is beyond the capabilities of the Editor of a broad-interest *Journal* such as this. Almost all authors—there are very few exceptions—are appreciative of the advice from such referees. Sometimes of course, this advice is very specific but often a few words from a referee deserve a wider audience. These pages could constitute a vehicle for handing on such advice, rather than have it languish in our correspondence archives. Two recent examples I would like to pass on: "just because something is plausible, doesn't mean it is true" is good advice for the over-enthusiastic builder of new hypotheses; and "new techniques are often applied to old problems and come up with the same answers but no new ideas" is a sobering thought for those who may be seduced by new technology rather than new science.

Correspondence files are not the only forgotten archives that could be mined for the good of science. There are, I believe, hidden away in the research notebooks of workers in specialized fields of pharmacology, biochemistry, toxicology, clinical chemistry and physiology large amounts of normal physiological values that would be of immense value to other workers seeking to make sense of research results or to set them in context. For example, what is the agreed normal (or normal range) of blood flow to the various organs of the human body? or the accepted rate of growth of different experimental animals? Such values may sometimes be published as "controls", but are not usually collated for their own sake. Indeed many *Journals*, including this one, may turn away such data as being "not novel" or "breaks no new ground". However, I believe that there is a need for this data to be more widely available and would welcome such submissions for publication. Such papers would consist mainly of tables, with clear reference to methodology used, but no discussion. They would be refereed in the usual way, although consensus returns from workers in different laboratories would be extremely valuable in this exercise. I would envisage that such normal, or standard values would be used by those interested in the physiological modelling of the fate of administered drugs—in man and animals—and would act as reference values for workers entering new fields. Normal values could even be extended to cover "normal values" for a diseased state.

This has been the first Editorial in the history of this distinguished *Journal*. I do not propose to monopolize this page for even the next issue and I anticipate that guest Editors will be invited to air their views on some of the more lively scientific controversies of the day.

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