

Editorial

The British Pharmaceutical Conference

This issue of the Journal includes a further selection of papers from the science symposia at the British Pharmaceutical Conference held in Eastbourne last year. In a previous issue (May 1999, pp 453–541), we published papers from symposia dealing mostly with natural product research. The new papers published here reflect the wide range of interests that the Conference caters for and indeed indicates the breadth of knowledge demanded of today's pharmaceutical scientist.

The first paper by Andrew Galwey tackled very thoroughly the pitfalls and hazards in investigating the kinetics of some classical pharmaceutical systems (Galwey 1999). Dr Galwey's paper, while concentrating on the kinetics of such systems as degradation, hydration, phase changes and equilibration, was a pointed reminder that it is essential to understand the chemical principles behind any laboratory procedures. In the days of sophisticated analytical equipment and computers which can apparently retrieve manageable data from the worst of experiments, it is refreshing to read a critical analysis of the chemistry that supports almost any laboratory procedure, however much we may rely on the black boxes.

Chronopharmacology was the subject of one of the Conference's major scientific symposia. Although the variations in physiology over the 24-hour day, or even during monthly or annual cycles is well-recognised, this knowledge into therapy (either defensively or aggressively) has not really been part of drug development strategy. Björn Lemmer reviewed the subject of chronopharmacokinetics and its implications for drug treatment (Lemmer 1999). Professor Lemmer pointed out that the variations in physiology with time could mean that drugs could be more or less effective at certain times, but there was also the potential for the drugs themselves being handled differently (variations in its distribution and metabolism for example) to introduce another time-related factor. Francis Lévi extended the discussion of time-related therapy with a comprehensive description of very new and painstaking work on the safe and effective treatment of cancer by using specific combinations of appropriate drugs administered according to a rigid timetable (Lévi 1999). The most recent manifestation of this timed approach was in the description of a device to administer the combination at the appropriate time of day, and this approach has had some promising

results in patients with metastatic colorectal cancer when compared with conventional administration.

Finally, in this collection of Conference papers, Professor David Woolfson expounded on the new commercial awareness necessary for the pharmaceutical scientist working in academia (Woolfson 1999). This commercial awareness is all-too obviously necessary in these days of exploitation of ideas and products arising in the research laboratories of the universities; the researcher needs to be aware of the value of his work, not just when he is revealing his findings, but also before the research is undertaken, if the full fruits of the work are to be enjoyed by the discoverer. However, it is hoped that there will still be room for 'beautiful thoughts' in academic research; that is research carried out purely out of curiosity. The existence of the annual Ig noble prizes, awarded for research projects that 'can not or should not be repeated' would suggest that there are areas of research that are considered totally useless. It would be interesting however to look at some of the Ig noble prizewinners in a few years time and see if they truly deserve their accolade!

The wandering nature of this Editorial has, I hope, served its purpose. That purpose was to draw attention to the variety of subject matter and scope for mental stimulation of the science symposia and other sessions at the British Pharmaceutical Conference. This year's Conference, the 136th, will take place in Cardiff from September 13th to 16th. The Science Chairman will be Professor Ray Rowe of AstraZeneca. Professor Rowe has taken the Conference theme—New Technology: a catalyst for change—to mount a strong programme on new technologies in drug development. Hence there will be two symposia emphasising the role of computers: Novel Computational Approaches in Pharmaceutical Development, with papers on crystal engineering, crystal polymorphs, solid state properties and tablet formulation; and Genomics and Bioinformatics. Powerful Tools in Drug Discovery, with papers on the human genome project, genomics, proteomics and information management.

A third symposium will be devoted to Combinatorial Chemistry and High-throughput Screening. Here, although the emphasis will be on the techniques and laboratory approaches, it will be apparent that the great advances in these fields have only been possible with the application of the microprocessor.

Once again the UK and Ireland Controlled Release Society will collaborate on a two-day symposium, this time on Intelligent Delivery Systems, emphasising the increasing sophistication of drug delivery to the site where it is needed at the optimum levels. The Joint Pharmaceutical Analysis Group will tackle the problems inherent in the analysis of biopharmaceuticals, and there will be a symposium on the latest findings in the application of leukotriene research in asthma.

The *Journal of Pharmacy and Pharmacology* will produce the Conference Supplement containing abstracts of these papers as well as over 300 Abstracts from free communications, keynote addresses and poster sessions, again emphasising the variety and extent of the work reported at the

Conference. Full details can be obtained from our Web site at <http://dSPACE.dial.pipex.com/jpp/>

References

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