

The future direction of the *Journal of Pharmacy and Pharmacology*

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THE LAST YEAR has seen some radical changes to the *Journal of Pharmacy and Pharmacology*. The editorial office has now moved to Belfast and with the help of the Pharmaceutical Press and our highly efficient editorial assistant Ms Grainne McCarron we have managed to make the transition with remarkably little difficulty. We have changed the refereeing procedure in order to make processing more rapid while at the same time more thorough. The sister Journal *Pharmacy and Pharmacology Communications* has been discontinued and will be incorporated into the main Journal as a short communications section. Finally, the Journal has been relaunched with a new cover, layout and presentation style to match the dynamic and innovative nature of the publication. These changes are, however, merely the current manifestations of an ongoing process of evolution. With the help of both the Editorial Board and the Pharmaceutical Press we have also been examining the future direction of the Journal with great care and it is our pleasure to use this opportunity to inform our readership of the changes to come. Some of these developments will be immediately apparent while others will be introduced over a period of months or years. We see these developments focusing on two main issues: the scientific priorities of the Journal and the logistics associated with achieving our objectives.

In terms of the scientific direction of the Journal, we appreciate that authors, readers and subscribers currently have an extremely wide choice of available publications dealing with pharmaceutical issues. Interestingly, however, the number of pharmaceutical journals with a broad scientific remit is comparatively limited. To this effect we fully intend to maintain the breadth of the *Journal of Pharmacy and Pharmacology*, not only because we feel it is a key strength of the Journal but also because it allows us to be adaptable in the light of developments within the pharmaceutical arena. However, the Journal also needs to have focus and identity. In addition to maintaining our traditional strengths in pharmacology, biomedical and natural product chemistry, pharmaceuticals and drug delivery our belief is that we should pay particular attention to emerging areas that are not fully covered by specialist publications and for which a broad-based pharmaceutical journal would be a suitable home. Areas such as the design and delivery of macromolecular drugs, the development of biotechnological products, the introduction of novel analytical approaches to dosage form design, the mechanism of drug action at the cellular and molecular level and the wealth of knowledge that will be forthcoming following the discovery of the composition of the human genome are all areas that cross the boundaries between traditional categories of pharmaceutical research. We will be actively encouraging the submission and inclusion of such interdisciplinary studies but should emphasise that this will not be at the expense of good quality work in more traditional subject areas.

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We are pleased to announce a number of developments in terms of the composition of the Journal. As mentioned above, we are now including a communications section that is intended for work whereby fast processing can be justified by the quality of the findings. We shall also be including a far greater number of full reviews and minireviews than has previously been the case; interested authors are advised to contact the editors prior to submission of such articles. Furthermore, we shall be running a series of focused issues whereby a number of papers on a particular theme are included. In addition, we shall be increasing the number of book reviews and are currently examining our policy regarding the announcement of forthcoming meetings; we are also discussing ways in which our on-line service can be improved (subscribers can access the on-line journal via www.ingenta.com). Finally, we shall be running a series of guest editorials from distinguished scientists, whereby such individuals are given a free hand to express their views on topics of current interest. In short, we intend each issue of the Journal to be a stimulating mixture of original research, reviews and contributed articles that taken together serve to highlight the current topics of major debate within the pharmaceutical field.

In order to achieve the above objectives we must offer our contributors rapid and thorough reviewing combined with fair and objective editorial decision making.

To this end we have instigated the following changes to the reviewing and editorial process. We have updated the Instructions for Contributors in line with the new format of the Journal and have instigated changes with regard to the number, selection and communication with referees. Authors are also being encouraged to suggest up to three individuals for the assessment of their work; we would normally use at least one of those recommendations. We have also made some fairly substantial changes to the editorial policy in terms of the acceptance or otherwise of submitted papers. We do not believe that the absence of serious scientific flaws is, in itself, sufficient grounds for a paper to be accepted; that paper must also represent a useful contribution to the field. Consequently we are asking our referees to comment on both the standard of science and the extent to which the paper will advance the subject. Editorial decisions will be made on both criteria.

This is a very exciting time for the *Journal of Pharmacy and Pharmacology* and we fully anticipate that this period of rapid change will continue through 2001 and beyond. It is our intention to provide our readers with a lively and influential journal while also providing our contributors with a fair and supportive home for their work. We would like to end by thanking our readers, authors and referees for their invaluable support and wishing them every success for the New Year.