

## Themed Issue: *Drugs from Neotropical Origin*

As readers of the *Journal of Pharmacy and Pharmacology* (JPP) will be aware, one of the aims of this year (as stated in the editorial in January 2005) is the introduction of themed issues that embrace the overall ethos of the journal. In these themed issues, it is proposed to dedicate substantial space in one issue of the JPP to the publication of a series of invited, peer reviewed original papers within a common research theme. The objective of themed issues will be to ensure both that the content is topical and that those papers selected are of the highest research quality, being peer reviewed in accordance with journal policy. Whilst the logistics of the organization and coordination of this issue were challenging, it is my great pleasure to present the first themed issue, *Drugs from Neotropical Origin*, in the *Journal of Pharmacy and Pharmacology*. One of the initial challenges was the selection of a 'theme' that would be of interest to experts in the research area but also be of interest to the readership of the journal. After discussion with the editorial board, the theme of *Drugs from Neotropical Origin* was proposed by Professor Michael Heinrich, which as readers will be able to observe was an excellent choice for this first themed issue.

In today's scientific climate, the search for new therapeutic agents is necessary to ensure that the treatment of disease states is constantly improved. As a result there has been a growing interest in the extraction and characterization (chemical and biological) of potential drug candidates from natural sources. While commonly the focus has been on the search for pure natural products as novel pharmaceutical agents, some of the papers in the series also highlight the importance of complex extracts derived from specific plant species which have potential in primary health care. The readers of the JPP will have noticed that the journal has embraced the importance of this scientific discipline by focusing on drugs from natural sources as a subject category in its own right. This discipline has now been chosen as the topic of a themed issue in which approximately half of the published articles are associated with this research category. In this issue I am delighted to welcome multidisciplinary, often multinational, collaborative contributions from research groups in Mexico, Italy, the USA and the United Kingdom. These describe the chemical and biological properties of novel drugs from primarily Central American and Mexican sources. The Neotropis is a well circumscribed, biodiversity rich and culturally diverse region spanning a large part of Central America as well as the lowlands of Northern South America. Most of the work in the series focuses in fact on Central American countries. The topics of the papers in the themed issue will be of great interest both to those directly in the area of drugs from natural sources and also to those who have a general interest in novel developments in Pharmacy and Pharmacology. More specifically, the manuscripts describe the potential for the use of these products for the treatment of gastrointestinal disorders and also their antimicrobial and cytotoxic activities. All these data are equally relevant to the regions of origin of these botanical drugs and for academic research in 'the North'.

In addition to the provision of a themed issue for this topic, the JPP will ensure that the papers published will be disseminated to the key research groups who are involved in this field of research. It is hoped that this will both publicize the research of those groups who have contributed to this themed issue and to consolidate the profile of the JPP in the field. As mentioned previously, the provision of this themed issue has raised many logistical challenges and, accordingly, there are many people whom I would like to thank for their tireless efforts on behalf of the journal. Firstly I must thank Grainne McCarron at the JPP editorial office in Belfast, and Natalie Lane at Pharmaceutical Press for ensuring that the papers were carefully processed and published to their deserved high quality. In addition, the support of the Pharmaceutical Press, in particular Paul Weller, for the concept of the themed issue has been invaluable. Finally, I am indebted to my colleague and friend Michael Heinrich for his vision, his organization and his ability to recruit high quality research groups involved in this area to submit their research to the JPP.

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