
Editorial

Reflections of the Editor-in-Chief: The Best Has Yet to Come

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This is my last editorial as the Editor-in-Chief of *Pharmaceutical Research*. Beginning next January, Dr. Peter Swaan of the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy will be your leader. An accomplished, prolific pharmaceutical scientist with research interests in drug transporters, membrane proteins, and computational biology, Peter is a meticulous editor with high scholarly standards. He exercises great care to ensure that the *Pharmaceutical Research* papers currently managed by him receive a vigorous, constructive review. As a service to authors—especially the new investigators, he routinely takes the time to analyze the referees' critiques and advises the authors on ways to improve the paper's impact.

When I was appointed editor-in-chief in 1995, I pledged to take the impact factor of the journal to 3.0 by the end of my first term. Well, it has taken a few more years than I originally envisioned. Nevertheless, with perseverance, shared optimism, and support by the pharmaceutical community, *Pharmaceutical Research* reached its important milestone of scoring an impact factor of 3.441 on the eve of its Silver Jubilee. Impact factor aside, I always found it gratifying to learn from readers and authors the high respect they showed for our journal. To many of them, *Pharmaceutical Research* is the flagship journal of pharmaceutical sciences.

There are four factors that have helped sustain my enthusiasm for *Pharmaceutical Research*. First and foremost is a sense of duty to raise our journal's stature through championing novelty and quality. *Pharmaceutical Research* was an important platform for me and many others like me to demonstrate our scientific independence as we navigated our way into the scientific world. Second, it is the thrill that came with perusing the content of new manuscripts, averaging four to six per day. By knowing the pulse of pharmaceutical research, we can serve our readers and authors better, an example of evidence-based publishing. Third, it is the euphoric feeling triggered from learning from the very best scientists and clinicians in the field by virtue of my access to them in their role as author, reviewer, editorial advisory board member, or editor. Fourth, it is the satisfaction that came by playing an unsolicited mentoring role in the career advancement of future movers and shakers in pharmaceutical sciences. I judiciously exercised my prerogative in selecting some as reviewers and naming a select few others as editorial board members or editors.

A number of changes have been instituted in *Pharmaceutical Research* over the last decade. Some changes were logistic, such as redesigning the cover, lifting the limits on words and references, and waiving color charges at my discretion. Other changes were implemented to streamline the review process and the production process so that valuable knowledge would be available to the scientific community in a timely manner. The launching of Editorial Manager, our online manuscript submission and review system, in 2003 is certainly another milestone. Recently added features dealt with diversifying and enriching the content of our

journal, including the active commissioning of expert reviews and themed sections/issues. The objective was twofold: first, to connect pharmaceutical scientists with non-pharmaceutical scientists by way of expert reviews; second, in the case of themed sections, to identify and showcase the up and coming leaders whose work is destined to advance the frontier of pharmaceutical research.

Perhaps the most daunting challenge was to agree on our journal's focus. The number of competing "pharmaceutical" journals has at least doubled during my tenure. How can *Pharmaceutical Research* differentiate itself? There was a perennial debate within the editorial team on what *Pharmaceutical Research* should stand for. Those who were mindful of the official journal designation by AAPS favored a broad scope journal. Those who paid attention to the profile of submissions to our journal advocated for a journal with a better defined focus, which turned out to be drug transport, drug delivery and pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics. Those of you who have access to the print version may have already noticed the tag line—"Mechanism-based", "Hypothesis-driven"—on the cover of each issue since 2007. Manuscripts of that orientation are being assigned a higher priority for review. Manuscripts that advance pharmaceutical sciences marginally are being returned to the authors within days of manuscript receipt. Between 25% and 35% of the submissions in 2008 were triaged or not processed for full peer review, in order to maximize the time volunteer reviewers need to do a critical review on those manuscripts deemed of high quality by editors. In my view, ultimately, *Pharmaceutical Research* should strive to be recognized as the authoritative archival of research breakthroughs that advance drug discovery, development, and regulation.

There are no other times in recent history when the world is confronted with so many challenges and, at the same time, showered with so many excellent opportunities for innovation. We must be prepared to create the infrastructure to align with the astonishingly rapid pace of advances in informational and communication technology, which already is changing the way scientists of tomorrow prefer to interact and participate in the knowledge revolution. I do not know with certainty how the content of *Pharmaceutical Research* at its Golden Jubilee (in another 25 years) will be delivered, but I am certain that it will be multi-dimensional. In addition, I speculate that, by then, more comprehensive, substantive reports, which likely will be examined by a panel of reviewers, will be the norm for documenting research. The responsibilities of editors and editorial board members are expected to escalate in such a competitive environment.

How may editors and Springer make *Pharmaceutical Research* the forum of choice to validate and archive research? Editors must be prepared to take on a more proactive role in the generation and quality assurance of knowledge than in the past. They must ride the waves of change in the manner scientists

prefer to interact and communicate. Open access will be universal. Sharing of information will be more prevalent; even the industrial sector which is habitually conservative in sharing information will contribute to renewing the knowledge space. This transformational change in attitude and philosophy towards information and knowledge will have a profound impact on improving the efficiency of scientific research. This will free up resources for additional worthy projects, thereby improving the odds of making a difference in quality of life and productivity of the economy.

In closing, I am honored to have served the pharmaceutical scientist community as the Editor-in-Chief of *Pharmaceutical Research* for more than a decade. I am privileged to work with

many talented and dedicated scientists from all over the world to make our journal the best it can be. In this regard, I thank the AAPS leadership and the Springer management for their confidence and trust in my leadership of our journal. It was the editorial freedom that made my service an enjoyable as well as personally and professionally rewarding experience.

Please join me in wishing Dr. Peter Swaan great success as he takes his place as the next guardian of the crown jewel of pharmaceutical sciences—*Pharmaceutical Research*. The best has yet to come!!

Vincent H.L. Lee
Editor-in-Chief