



Psychopharmacology in its 60th year

Klaus A. Miczek^{1,2} · Trevor W. Robbins³

Published online: 21 November 2019
© Springer-Verlag GmbH Germany, part of Springer Nature 2019

Psychopharmacologia originated in 1959, in the midst of the discovery of the first promising pharmacological treatments for psychiatric disorders and an emerging global interest in psychedelic drugs. In recent decades, the neuropharmacological mechanisms and sites of drug action have become an integral component of the most successful articles in the Journal. From its beginning, the outstanding feature of *Psychopharmacology* remains carefully edited, contributions of persistent value. A hallmark feature of the editorial staff is their devotion to working with authors in order to produce a contribution of substance and enduring impact. After joining the editorial board in 1975, one of us (KAM) served as the coordinating Editor for nearly half of the Journal's life (1991–2019); he read and processed more than 6000 manuscripts, most of which received major revisions before ultimately appearing in the Journal. His emphasis on precise and concise presentation and interpretations that adhered to the actual data as well as good graphics added the finishing touches to the submitted versions. In fact, Herbert Barry III, KAM's predecessor and mentor, maintained that there was no manuscript which could not be improved further.

Readers of *Psychopharmacology* value articles that contain thoroughly characterized drug action, preferably with dose-effect curves, with information on the mechanism and site of action. Recently developed opto- and pharmacogenetic tools achieve higher spatial and temporal resolutions and yet more chemically specific interventions. It is interesting, for example, to contrast the relatively non-specific and widespread actions of drugs of abuse within the brain with the effects of specific activation by

light pulses of dopamine neurons of the ventral tegmental area. Which is the better model for the real world of addiction, and which is best for understanding the wiring and physiology of the brain's reinforcement system?

The editors of *Psychopharmacology* expertly identify emerging research fronts by inviting guest editors to organize Special Issues, most often based on symposia and workshops at recent conferences. Both of us began this series of Special Issues in the early 1990s, and eventually, these issues began to showcase the innovative work of younger colleagues who have developed and refined novel methods, discovered new drug effects, and elucidated mechanisms of action. The Special Issues have become valuable resources to a large extent because they are anchored by timely scholarly reviews, most often authored by members of the editorial board. Recent Special Issues have covered wide-ranging topics such as Extinction, Computational Psychopharmacology, “Bath Salts,” and The Microbiome. We have also honored the scientific contributions of famous, deceased psychopharmacologists, not only by appropriate obituaries, but on occasion by issues devoted to work submitted by their colleagues (e.g., SR Goldberg, A Markou). One of these commemorative issues was published in 2002 honoring Peter Dews, Bill Morse, and Roger Kelleher—a genuine collector's item!

In terms of bibliometric indices, articles in *Psychopharmacology*, stand out not so much on account of the immediate impact factor, but by enjoying a very long half-life. While unusual, unexpected, and seemingly surprising findings garner immediate attention, leading to a citation “bubble” (i.e., high 2-year impact factor), they often remain unrepeated. Researchers return to *Psychopharmacology* again and again for the archival value of rigorously collected data and useful methods. In addition, *Psychopharmacology* continues to attract original reports of novel therapeutic drugs such as compounds that may enhance cognitive functions. Furthermore, the Journal is an important venue for reports on drugs with abuse liability as well as therapeutic potential. Considerable discussion among the members of the editorial board ultimately led to a positive decision to publish an

✉ Klaus A. Miczek
klaus.miczek@tufts.edu

¹ Department of Psychology, Tufts University, 530 Boston Ave. (Bacon Hall), Medford, MA 02155, USA

² Department of Neuroscience, Tufts University, Boston, MA, USA

³ Department of Psychology, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK

analysis of mystical experiences after consuming a hallucinogenic compound (Griffiths et al. 2006).

Distinguishing between fads and serendipitous findings is a particular challenge for the editors of *Psychopharmacology*. In the past decade, preclinical work has been scrutinized and critiqued intensively, primarily on account of many failures to replicate and the often questionable translation of animal models to the clinical disease. The editors of the Journal have summarized and updated the criteria for preparing and evaluating a manuscript (Steckler et al. 2016). Reproducibility is indeed an essential feature of psychopharmacological—indeed any—research and is the basis for the longevity of articles in the Journal.

A much more challenging task is the development and implementation of laboratory models that can be translated to the clinical application (from bench to bed and back). High-throughput screens may indeed be counterproductive. We have addressed this need by recent Special Issues focusing on translational themes such as Autism Spectrum Disorder and Neuroimmune Signaling in Neuropsychiatric Disease. The Editors of the Journal encourage innovation for valid models of anxiety and affective disorders, cognitive disorders, drug abuse, stress disorders, and others.

A very important development for *Psychopharmacology* has been its recent adoption by the European Behavioural Pharmacology Society (EBPS) as its official journal. The EBPS was founded in 1986 and ever since has held successful biennial meetings and workshops. Accordingly, we have

appointed a special editor (Dr. C Baunez) to act as the representative editor for the Society and we look forward to international meetings that will help in the future to represent the strengths and new departures of this increasingly interdisciplinary domain. A further trend for EBPS and for *Psychopharmacology* are many submissions by colleagues from Asia, which has already led to representation on the editorial board.

One of the reasons for the success of *Psychopharmacology* is that the editors continue to be active researchers, productive authors, and well-informed reviewers. For the editors, it is always a humbling experience to receive incisive comments by a reviewing colleague that begin with the words “The senior author ought to be familiar with...”

References

- Griffiths RR, Richards WA, McCann U, Jesse R (2006) Psilocybin can occasion mystical-type experiences having substantial and sustained personal meaning and spiritual significance. *Psychopharmacology* 187(3):268–283. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00213-006-0457-5>
- Steckler T, Curran HV, de Wit H, Howes O, Hoyer D, Lucki I, Miczek KA, Morrow AL, Price LH, Robbins TW (2016) Editorial: reporting guidelines for *Psychopharmacology*. *Psychopharmacology* 233(7): 1131–1134. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00213-016-4252-7>

Publisher's note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.