Journal of Medicine and the Person: where we are and future challenges

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With this issue, the Journal is concluding its eighth year of life. It is time then to make a retrospective assessment of what we have done, to identify the milestones we have reached and must not forget, and to lay down the roadmap to direct our future efforts. I am convinced that as present Editor of the Journal I need to share the ongoing debate and work that the Editorial Board is doing with all Journal readers, first of all to receive some feedback and, I still do expect, to increase the number of good contributions and papers.

Journal of Medicine and the Person was first published in 2003 with all articles in Italian. From the early years, many articles were in English and from 2009, starting with Springer-Verlag as the publisher, the Journal began to appear entirely in English. In 2010, there was a change in the Editorial Board, in recognition of the contributions that allow the Journal to improve, with promising collaborations from well known scientists in the US and in several European countries. Meanwhile, the Journal itself has changed, addressing the specific topics and increasing the number of specific sections. We now enjoy reading Case Reports, Issues in International Public Health, and Why Do We Need to Take Care of Others, in addition to the old sections: Books, Hospital Histories and Art and Medicine.

From an editorial point of view, with the larger distribution of Springer, Journal articles are read and downloaded from many countries in the world and new articles are coming from abroad.

For this reason we feel that reaffirming the mission and the objectives of the Journal is crucial at this point in time.

Journal of Medicine and the Person is a quarterly peer-reviewed international journal that publishes original scientific papers and state-of-the-art reviews with the aim of broadening knowledge and promoting discussion among health care professionals, with particular reference to the humanistic aspects of medicine. The purpose of the journal is to offer a cultural and scientific tool to acknowledge the central role of the person in medicine. For this reason, in its last meeting in July 2010, the Editorial Board maintained the classification of the Journal in Medicine, emphasising the underlying idea that only from our clinical work are the humanistic implications of medicine challenged. And when this happens, it may end up challenging the scientific backgrounds, in addition to prompting us to return to a good-hearted practice of medicine with our patients. This is the major topic addressed by Luigi Tesio's paper [1] in this Journal issue, and it can be considered as a first theoretical clue which may hopefully stimulate more thoughts and contributions.

It is no trivial matter then to recall the objectives of the Journal: to develop new instruments, procedures and techniques to treat and cure patients in different branches of medicine; to advance research methods specifically aimed at developing and assessing the efficacy of multi-disciplinary care as well as innovative study design, assessment methods, statistical tools for clinical researches, with particular interest if conducted on small samples. The Journal wishes to publish the results of research studies and reviews in a number of areas. These include the assessment of educational programmes for physicians, nurses, health-care professionals and caregivers capable of improving patient care; the integration between clinical and social medicine with a public health perspective; the assessment of health care systems and programmes to improve patient outcome and satisfaction in a cross-cultural and

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international perspective; epidemiological studies assessing the social gap in care and treatment, with particular emphasis on improving the care of people in the lower socio-economic classes and in developing countries; evidence-based reviews of results of controlled studies aimed at improving quality of life of patients and clarifying the bioethical aspect of medicine; and specific-target oriented dissertations on theoretical aspects of clinical medicine and the organisation of health services.

In recent years, we have published invited papers, reviews and original articles touching on different humanistic aspects of medicine. Some of these have examined the theoretical and ethical aspects of medicine. Among the former, I wish to recall the in-depth considerations between a humanistic or a mechanical approach in medicine [2] and the philosophical bases of ethical reasoning in contrast with reductive technical reasoning, which is acritically prevailing in medicine in our time [3]. The series of articles on the content of patient quality of life, summarised in the editorials by Lodovico Balducci and Giancarlo Cesana [4, 5], were concluded with Marco Bregni's considerations about the essential difference between quality of life and sense of life [6]. The contributions from the first congress of the psychiatrists and psychologists of the Association, emphasised the limit of treatment when a clinician's hope is gone. Among the ethical contributions, we cannot forget the important review of the evidence supporting the ethical considerations on the beginning of life.

The Journal has published original papers on a variety of topics. These include the methods and results of the assessment of quality of life of different types of patients and in different clinical settings; innovative treatments and procedures; reviews of evidence of the poor efficacy of emergency contraception in young women; the efficacy of comprehensive HIV prevention programmes, including education tools assessed in Uganda and other developing countries; and some considerations on the still ongoing reform of the medical schools of specialisations in Italy. Some contributions have also been published on health care reforms as well as on access to care and social justice in a worldwide perspective.

The critical issue now concerns the spreading of these approaches and contents. At present, the *Journal of*

Medicine and the Person is indexed by GoogleTM, as it was from its very beginning. It is also listed in the Springer journal catalogue and reachable via SpringerLink.com in order to increase the journal's visibility. SpringerLink is a comprehensive electronic content platform which hosts a substantial collection of journals, books, protocols and reference works consisting of over 4.6 million documents with a global consultation of 165 million full-text downloads in 2009.

We are successfully complying with all the criteria required by Index Medicus/Medline regarding validity, importance and originality of the contents; objectivity, credibility and quality of contents granted by the methods of selecting articles; external peer reviewing; adherence to ethical standards; production quality (layout, printing, graphics and illustrations); timeliness and broad geographic representation and coverage. An application to the Literature Selection Technical Review Committee of The National Library of Medicine is underway.

These achievements have been possible and the next will be reached only thanks to the intense work of a group of people who dedicate their time and energy to this venture. This group is growing but is still not enough to achieve the future accomplishments, which will make possible a formal application to Thomson Reuters-ISI within a couple of years or less.

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