Editorial

Happy New Year - 1988

As the Düsseldorf Editorial Team enters into the sixth and final year of its tenure for *Diabetologia* with some exhaustion but uncompromised enthusiasm, it is with gratitude that I look back to another exciting editorial year and an extraordinarily positive cooperation within the Editorial Board. First of all, I would like to thank Dr. Roger H. Unger (Dallas, USA) and Dr. P. Brunetti (Perugia, Italy) who depart from *Diabetologia's* Advisory Board after 4 years of active service and support for the journal at the end of 1987. Furthermore, the Editor would like to express special thanks and appreciation to Ms Marie C. Kroll *Diabetologia's* Editorial Assistant for the last 3 years who decided to return homebound towards Seattle, Washington (USA) after a most effective tenure with our journal and after handing over to her successor, Ms Christine Tripp who is running the editorial business together with Ms Carolyn Weber since last spring. Thanks again, Marie, for all the help and untiring motivation which you devoted to *Diabetologia* and Europe's diabetology during the past years!

It is with great pleasure that I can announce today that due to the continuing generous support by Les Laboratoires Servier (France) and Novo Industri (West Germany) we shall be able to prolong the free distribution of 40 subscriptions to *Diabetologia* until the end of 1989 to Eastern European colleagues [1]. I would like to use this opportunity to encourage the extension of such unselfish, effective and needed support to those parts of the world where our colleagues find it increasingly difficult to find the resources to fund a regular subscription to *Diabetologia*. During the past weeks, I have often thought I would be even more grateful and happy had I received the funds for a *Diabetologia* subscription (or for material for metabolic self-control) to be distributed to a colleague who is in desperate need of those items - rather than the excessive numbers of 1988 calendars or other more or less spirited gifts for the festive season.

In September of 1987, *Diabetologia's* Editorial Board met at two historical sites in Leipzig/East Ger-

many - with the famous Auerbach's Keller being one of them. Detailed statistical analyses of *Diabetologia's* editorial output have confirmed that the journal continues to receive more than 450 original manuscripts per year from all over the world with an acceptance rate of around 25% - figures which have remained remarkably constant over the past years. It is our expectation that this rather favourable situation will remain unchanged, despite the fact that, since the early eighties one to three new diabetes journals have been founded every year. It remains miraculous to me why all of these journals are thought to be necessary - except maybe for the commercial interests of the publishers. In fact, it is quite obvious that the plethora of these new journals will, in the long run, represent a serious danger for the traditional peer-reviewed publication system of the established leading scientific organs, as it will eventually lead to a dilution of information, slicing of data presentation, repetitive distribution of knowledge, the apparent (but unwarranted) necessity to subscribe to (and even read) five journals whereas one or two would actually suffice, and an increasing confusion, especially among our younger colleagues.

Diabetologia's Editorial Board has taken some preventive measures to exclude, as far as possible, the slicing of studies into least publishable units (LPU) and to substantiate the responsibility of being a (co-)author of a scientific paper [2]. During 1987, we have enforced these policies to the extent of asking our authors to clarify their positions (following the publication of original articles) in the format of letters to the Editor on two occasions. In the years to come, we shall continue to clarify and strengthen these policies; accordingly, the general volume limitation for original manuscripts has been omitted from the present version of our Instructions to Authors (see this issue) in order to encourage potential authors to submit even extensively long manuscripts, in case this is warranted by the extent of the data generated, rather than splitting substantial investigations into two or more shorter publications. Another danger to the traditional system of

scientific publications, apart from the proliferation of journals and *fraud in science* [2], appears to be the growing influence of sponsors of (scientific) investigations with regard to the definition of research aims and experimental protocols [3]. Editors and the peer-review system will have to scrutinize investigations carried out to document efficacy and side-effects of new drugs in comparison to already available pharmaceutical agents or procedures with extraordinary care regarding the relevance of the aim of the studies and the appropriate balance between aims, experimental design and interpretations/conclusions of the investigation. In this context, the Editorial Board of *Diabetologia* decided in September 1987 to uphold its policy not to publish any supplement issues covering proceedings of symposia on (new) therapeutic procedures as sponsored by the pharmaceutical industry. This decision is in obvious contrast to the policies of a number of (even reputable) scientific journals. The publication of supplement issues of *Diabetologia* will remain reserved to original manuscripts which have to undergo the usual peer review editorial process.

Further decisions of the 1987 meeting of the Editorial Board included (a) not to publish any 'official statement' or 'consensus paper', whether they originate from official, authorised or self-selected groups of investigators or committees; (b) to liberalise the editorial policies concerning the publication of *Letters to the Editor*. So far such articles had to be directly related to papers recently published in *Diabetologia*. In order to allow for a broader and freer exchange of opinions, effective 1 January 1988, the Editor will consider 'letters' for publication without direct relationship to prior

publications in *Diabetologia*. It has to be understood, though, that it is not intended to turn the *Letters to the Editor* section of *Diabetologia* into a forum for the release of unsubstantiated and less than preliminary observations.

Finally, the Editorial Board has recognised – not without pride and satisfaction – that the editorial process of *Diabetologia* has been continuously shortened over the past years to become the fastest of any comparable journal in this field of medicine: the average time for publication of an original paper is presently 7.5 months, and of a Rapid Communication 2.5 months.

With this positive news and many thanks to everybody who has contributed to the progress of our journal, and to the colleagues who have continued to provide us with approximately 1500 expert reviews per year, I remain with my very best wishes for health, peace, and happiness in 1988,

Yours sincerely,
Michael Berger

Düsseldorf, 1 January 1988

References

1. Berger M (1987) Happy New Year – 1987. *Diabetologia* 30: 1
2. Berger M (1986) Letter to the Reader: 1986. *Diabetologia* 29: 825–826
3. Hampton JR, Julian DG (1987) Role of pharmaceutical industry in major clinical trials. *Lancet* II: 1258–1259