Fabula (non) acta est....Endocrine

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This is my last Editorial as Editor-in-Chief of Endocrine. I will leave my office as of December 31st after eight extraordinary years of intense work and enormous satisfaction. As a friend and mentor of mine says (in Italian) at the end of any big event “finito la commedia” and as the title states, with Svetonio [1], I can say that, for me, this wonderful and long story has come to an end!

Therefore, I would like to briefly look back and reflect on the work we have done on the journal during the last eight years. When I took this responsibility at the beginning of 2011 many, including myself, were skeptical about our chances of raising the Journal’s fortune; the exception being a few close, visionary friends who were enthusiastic about

its prospects. Although Endocrine started strong under the guidance of its founder, Michael Conn, it was at the time struggling in a world of giants with an impact factor slightly above one and in the midst of an extremely delicate transition to a wholly different online manuscript management system.

Though the task remained difficult, I nevertheless thought that there was a chance for an independent journal to make some fruitful contributions to our beloved discipline and I accepted the challenge with a certain degree of caution. As is usually the case with me, all these mixed feelings were transparently acknowledged in my first Editorial for Endocrine in April 2011 [2].

It is true that as a scientist I strongly believe in results and numbers. Thus, one may think there is little to add to the apparently monumental figures achieved by Endocrine under my governance such as triplicating the impact factor (which has remained steadily above three for several years now), increasing the submissions (from less than 400 the first year to steadily above 1100 in the last four years), increasing the downloads (last year over 300,000), and doubling the size of the Journal (from 6 to 12 issues per year).

However, as a doctor I also strongly believe in communication and, particularly, in keeping the word given to a patient, to a colleague, or to a fellow! This guarantees credibility and trust between members of the community, which is of paramount importance in our work and life. As such, another good method to evaluate what has been achieved in the last eight years is to read my first Editorial [2] and see if what was outlined at the time has been accomplished and to what extent. This may, at least in part, answer the question that many used to ask me at meetings and conferences—i.e., what is the secret of this Journal’s success and though the answer may not be as exciting as a M.J. Fox blockbuster movie, it is still worth exploring.

Firstly, in 2011 I explained my concept of being an Editor-in-Chief [2]. My idea was that running a journal could not be a one-man show. Indeed, through my work as a scientist and doctor, I learned that only by winning over our

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narcissistic impulses and working as a team could we achieve our long term goals. In reality, Endocrine confirmed this concept by becoming the perfect paradigm of a successful team effort in which Associate Editors, Editorial Board members, Reviewers, Authors and Publisher all played very important roles. I started with appointing three Associate Editors—two of whom are still working for the Journal today. During the years the number of Associate Editors has tripled to keep abreast of the growth of the Journal and to enhance certain areas of expertise of the team as demanded by the increasingly broader range of topics being covered by Endocrine. Furthermore, a common denominator of the team has always been to be geographically close to me in order to facilitate communication and meetings. As such, I am proud to say that this Italian team of relatively young, but highly committed scientists proved to be as efficient and careful as to exceed my most optimistic expectations! Consequently, I must extend my thanks to all of them first and to all of my Associate Editors for the ceaseless effort, passion and dedication they have put into their service.

Moreover, as promised [2], with the help of the Associate Editors we have put together a superb and large-scale Editorial Board that, over the years, has come to include most of the major leaders of the endocrine and metabolic fields; additionally, a four year rotation term has been implemented to better accommodate the increased amount of work for all our members. In thanking all the scientists that have rotated through the Editorial Board, I want to acknowledge, as I did in my first Editorial [2], the motivation, friendship, and commitment of the not-so-few brave men and women who accepted with enthusiasm our invitation to join the first Editorial Board of a journal with many uncertainties in its future. A promise was made at the time that there would not be much work for them to do and this remains one of the few promises I have not been able to maintain thereafter! Together with my Associate Editors and the Board we have also tried to choose the best reviewers possible for every manuscript while minimizing their turn-around time (now less than three weeks) in an effort to ensure that every author receives, for example, an objective and quick first decision. Since our team handled nearly 8.000 manuscripts, one can imagine the enormous amount of people who we have been able to motivate and coagulate around this qualitative peer-review process which, although imperfect, remains the only basis on which a scientific journal can expand its credibility.

This community has grown enormously and, in some ways, has done so in line with one of my areas of expertise [3]. However, the most important piece of this community has been represented by our Authors who, in turn, were also the main audience of the Journal! They were the first to believe in the potential of the Journal and, while it used to

be the third or fourth choice for their submissions, it has since become a publication that receives their best scientific work. Consequently, authors view Endocrine as a place to publish even their Reviews and the *summa* of their work into which they usually put great effort and hopes [4]!

Furthermore, a good Editor-in-Chief is one who limits to a minimum the mistakes and bias that the whole peer-reviewing process unavoidably and intrinsically bears. Moreover, despite, but also due to the Journal's increasing space constraints, choices that were made sometimes were often close calls. Nevertheless, I can remember every one of the letters of complaints sent by unsatisfied authors and since my aging process is already quite advanced (as my collaborators are fond of saying), this means that there were very few indeed! To me this is a special recognition of the fairness of our evaluation process which is designed to give to each potential author an equal chance to publish her/his work in Endocrine. Reciprocal respect for their work is a *conditio sine qua non* and one which tightly links Editors and Authors.

One of the winning strategies in this relationship has been the effort to understand the evolving needs of the readership. In fact, over the years more and more specific manuscript categories have been introduced in Endocrine in order to diversify our offer of qualified space to researchers. While Reviews [5] and originals (we purposely and successfully maintained the original vocation of the journal to publish both clinical and basic research strongly believing that, particularly in Endocrinology, they are two faces of the same coin) still remain the columns of the Journal, we have also introduced from the beginning Mini-Reviews and Research Letters [6, 7]. However, we soon understood that authoritative Editorials [8, 9] would also be of interest, particularly when commenting on original contributions covering hot or controversial topics. During the years, the different categories have become so numerous (nineteen) that it is impossible to list them here and for all I will mention the newest addition, "Endocrine Surgery," which has immediately become one of the most preferred [10].

Additionally, the community and team concept would not be complete without a word of appreciation and thanks to the Publisher of Endocrine, i.e., Springer—a group which is known around the globe for its commitment to scientific publications and for being a very strong organization. However, as usual, the difference is made by the people. The publishing team of Endocrine quarterbacked by Laura Walsh has been fantastic in assisting the Editorial team in any kind of matter, leaving us a total independency in Editorial choices and yet working with the Journal so it feels like a single, big team. With a publisher and staff such as this, the success of this apparent mission-impossible was not so difficult to obtain, we can say *a posteriori*.

In conclusion, I do not know if I was able to answer the question about the secret of our success (and even I am not so sure that I want you to completely know it), but I am sure I was able to answer the Latin question which was the title of my first Editorial (the use of Latin being a tribute to my origins as an Italian)—*quo vadis* Endocrine [2]! In fact, your judgment has been astonishingly positive and it signifies that we have moved the Journal in the right direction. Finally, there remains the question of why I took the liberty to slightly modify Svetonio/Augustus' words [1] with the same use of Latin as an ideal *phil rouge* between my first and last Editorial. The answer, in this instance, is not difficult! I am sure that together we have built up an incredibly solid journal which in the beginning was a true *fabula*, but now is an established reality in the world of academic publishing in Endocrinology and Metabolism. Therefore, Prof. Sebastiano Filetti from Sapienza University in Rome, to whom I send my congratulations and best wishes, will be my successor as Editor-in-Chief of Endocrine. He is a true authority in the field of thyroid diseases [11] and I am sure that he will not only be able to continue Endocrine's standard of excellence, but will further improve the level of the Journal. For this reason, the *fabula* of Endocrine is not finished. Do not panic for this is only another Editor-in-Chief who is leaving the scene and if you wish, as Svetonio says [1], you can applaud not only him but, as per our philosophy, the whole team which served and will continue to serve in other offices for the good and growth of the discipline which we all love! See you soon, my friends!!

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