

Editorial



Neuroendocrinology Letters 2000; 21:1-3

Welcome to the Volume 21 of the Neuroendocrinology Letters, an international peer-reviewed transdisciplinary journal covering the fields of neuroendocrinology and related areas, including immunological, psychological, oncological, chronobiological and other aspects in the normal and pathological physiology (see Aim and Scope). Neuroendocrinology Letters invites the interdisciplinary discussions where the same topic can be viewed from different aspects. It should serve as a unique opportunity for the cross-fertilization between the different sciences and practices, rather than the merely multidisciplinary approach. The Journal strives for progressive medicine including preventive aspects.

The true vision of the Neuroendocrinology Letters (NEL) is the interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and integrative aspects of sciences and their entree into the twenty-first century. The bridge between neuroendocrinology, the immune system and the rest of the central nervous system opens the gateway to more common understanding and acceptance across disciplines. The NEL is an umbrella for the endeavor that unites various scientific fields from the basic and clinical research in their attempt to elucidate the processes of experience involved from the earliest stages of human life.

The NEL represents a real encounter between sciences, methodologies, approaches, different views, philosophies; encounters between science and art; basic research, clinical research and practice; encounters between the editors and readers, colleagues from different fields on the basis of inter- and transdisciplinarity; encounters between senior and junior researchers; encounters between scientists as human beings.

Last year (in the Volume 20) we introduced new headings and new divisions which continue on a regular basis: Guest and Invited Editorials, Invited Reviews (NEL Reviews), The Story Behind (see Vol. 20 Nos. 1/2, 3/4), Philosophy Behind Science (Vol. 20 Nos. 1/2, 3/4 and in this issue, Vol. 21 No. 1) and the Season's Appreciations (Vol. 20 Nos. 1/2 and Vol. 21 No. 1).

With this issue we open the second year of the "new" Neuroendocrinology Letters with its new layout, new format, 4-color print and, most importantly, with its new aim and scope. This last one is, from this volume and onwards, enlarged with chronobiology.

The Neuroendocrinology Letters opened itself for chronobiological papers already in the last issue (Vol. 20, 1999). The most distinguished journal, Chronobiologia, where Prof. Halberg was Editor-in-Chief, suspended publication in 1994. Together with Prof. Halberg, we feel that the new dimension of chronobiology in the Neuroendocrinology Letters will fill a void with the loss of a clinical outlet, i.e. Chronobiologia.

In this connection I am honored to inform you that Professor Halberg has kindly accepted my invitation to serve as the third Associate Editor of this Journal.

It is with pleasure that I welcome more distinguished colleagues who graciously accepted the invitation to join the Editorial Board from this issue of the *Neuroendocrinology Letters*:

Germaine Cornélissen, Ph.D., Co-Director, Halberg Chronobiology Center, University of Minnesota, Dept. of Laboratory Medicine, Minneapolis, USA.

Professor Dr. Med., Dr. h.c. *Günter Dörner*, em. Director, Inst. for Experimental Endocrinology, Charité, Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany.

RNDr. *Helena Illnerová*, DrSc., Vice-President of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Institute of Physiology, Prague, Czech Republic.

Professor *Robert Rapaport*, M.D., who joined the Editorial Board in October last year, has recently changed his affiliation as follows: Chief, Division of Pediatric Endocrinology and Diabetes, Dept. of Pediatrics, Mount Sinai School of Medicine, Director, Pediatric Section Mount Sinai Diabetes Center, Mount Sinai Medical Center, New York, USA.

Professor *Luchio Zichella*, M.D., Director, I Institute of Obstetrics and Gynecology, University of Rome "La Sapienza," Rome, Italy.

In this volume we will continue the course started with Vol. 20. Again as Professor Halberg put it, we added to "the content in scientific terms a human touch which unites scientific rigor with the complementary bedside manner that is important in every journal."

The **humanistic touch** should be one of the main goals of every scientific journal, especially medical, but this is unfortunately largely neglected. There have been many discussions in recent years about the dangers of biased judgment in assessing the quality of a particular scientific journal or a particular scientific paper published in it. Also the values of impact factors, as used in recent years, were often the objects of criticism. The main problem is that impact factors are being increasingly used for a purpose for which they were never intended, namely to evaluate individual applications for jobs or funding (Charles Jennings, Guest Editorial, *NEL* Vol. 20 Nos. 1/2, p. 7–10). Jennings continues "Most obviously, by the time the impact factors appear, the papers to which they refer are already two to three years old, so any recent changes in a journal's editorial policies will not be reflected in its impact factor.... The result of all this numerology has been an increasing obsession among researchers, particularly younger scientists who have not yet established their reputations, to boost their numbers by whatever means possible."

Another issue which is very much discussed, when estimating a particular journal's credibility, is the way of setting up the peer-review procedures and the definition of the competency of the editor in making the final decision on whether to accept the paper for publication. I am very pleased that we during the past year were able to enlarge the number of external independent peer-reviewers also outside of the Editorial Board, which on the one hand increases the objectivity of reviewing the submitted papers and on the other hand broadens the possibility for inviting experts from various disciplines.

As J. L. Crammer pointed out (Guest Editorial *NEL* Vol. 20 No. 5, p. 261–262), "The journal should lead and not follow. The editor will not rely simply on what the mail happens to deliver in choosing papers, reports and letters, but will go out inviting review articles, leaders, comments, dialogues and studies from active researchers, to widen interests and catch the new." This was and is our main policy in editing the *Neuroendocrinology Letters*.

Quoting another Guest Editorial (Peer review and editorial decision-making by Louise Howard and Greg Wilkinson, *NEL* Vol. 20 No. 5, p. 256–260), "The Editor's decision is final.... The editor needs to choose which papers to

accept, and a variety of factors influence his decisions. Fairness, openness, accountability and transparency compete with hubris and human error.” And in connection with this I wish to quote H. L. Freeman (Guest Editorial NEL Vol. 20 No. 5, p. 263), “But in the end, a journal’s quality depends on editorial flair, which is very difficult to quantify.”

In this issue of the Journal, in the Philosophy Behind Science, we are reprinting a paper published ten years ago in the International Journal of Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Medicine, stressing the indivisibility between the creative act and the health in the human being. This connection we can find in many grand pieces of European literature of the last century, such as “Mental healers” (German original “Die Heilung durch den Geist”), 1931 by Stefan Zweig. We intend to publish the introduction to this book in one of the next issues of this volume.

I am deeply indebted to all authors of this issue for their outstanding contributions: the Invited Guest Editorial, Invited Review Article, Original Papers and, already as tradition, the Season’s Appreciations.

We have also listed selected forthcoming scientific events for this and the next year, and we would be very appreciative if you will provide us continuously with more information which can be published in the next issues.

As always, I would very much appreciate receiving Book Reviews and Congress Reports as well as Letters to the Editor, to be published in this Journal.

In this Volume we will open a section of Medical History, and I welcome your contributions on this topic.

We look forward to your reactions concerning the “new look” of the NEL. We also look forward to receiving your papers for consideration for publication. We will try to shorten the time from receiving to publishing your peer-reviewed and accepted manuscripts in the shortest possible time. If you have a special reason for accelerating the publication of your manuscript, please let us know in your cover letter, and we will do our best to consider your request. We encourage and solicit young scientists to submit synopses of their Doctoral Theses or Dissertations for consideration for publication.

Our correspondence column is open for your comments, criticisms, questions, etc. We would appreciate Letters to the Editor, which we will treat on a liberal basis. However, we reserve the right to make a possible editorial restyle of them, mostly concerning their length.

As we pointed out already in the first issue of Volume 20, 1999, the Neuroendocrinology Letters is your journal. It is the reader’s journal and as Per Bergsjø, the previous outstanding Chief Editor of the Acta Obstetricia et Gynecologica Scandinavica said, “among the readers are also the Journal’s authors.”

Since many new readers have joined the Journal from this year, we would like to introduce them to the philosophy of the Neuroendocrinology Letters. We refer to my Editorials from the last Volume as well as the Editorials from the Art Director and Guest Editorials which can be sent from the Editorial Office on request and which are also available online www.nel.edu.

Peter G. Fedor-Freybergh

Editor-in-Chief

From the Art Director's Desk

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The humanistic touch which involves all the senses in the creation process both in science and art has been one of the main objectives of editing the *Neuroendocrinology Letters*. As Yehudi Menuhin said in his lecture at the Royal Institution, "... the creative act is the common bond between science and art."

The creation process is an indivisible phenomenon as are the somatic and psychological dimensions. Science and art are indivisible in the integrative approach to human life. Integration means also unification and harmony, and this latter, harmony, should be stressed specifically because this guides the way towards respect, tolerance and generosity.

Last year, beginning with the Volume 20, we refined the *Neuroendocrinology Letters* with an artistic touch connected to the scientific content. This is the way we convey the humanistic approach to our readers and this is the way we understand the comprehensive nature of every creative and scientific act.

We encourage all our readers to contribute to the artistic part of this Journal by submitting proposals, pieces of art to be considered for publishing (paintings, drawings, photographs, etc.), as well as poems, essays, belles-lettres, etc. We invite all of you to join us in finding the answers to the mystery of the "Feu sacré."

Lili Maas

Art & Advertising Director