Preface: Happy 50th anniversary!

This 50th anniversary of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (CCLM) is a great opportunity to review how the journal is responding to its aims, to assess what has been done and what the future holds. In preparing this preface, I have tried to review the literature in scientific journals and how other journals have celebrated their anniversary. I was much impressed by a recent Editorial by Thomas F. Luscher, the Editor in Chief of the European Heart Journal and, in particular, by one sentence. He wrote that “the history of mankind really began with the advent of writing” [1]. The system of writing, invented by the ancient Sumer in Mesopotamia some 5000 years ago, enabled information to be preserved and accessible, thus forming the cornerstone of our modern information society and therefore, democracy. In medicine, publishing makes scientific writing available, as only findings that are published exist, making possible improvements in professional knowledge, and therefore in patient care. In fact, the dissemination of new research results in pathophysiology, diagnostics and therapeutics by medical journals demonstrates the changing ways in which medical knowledge is conveyed to the medical community.

The story of CCLM and the name changes (Table 1) is a paradigm of its evolution that parallels the evolution of the discipline over time. In 1963, the journal’s name revealed its geographic origin (Germany) and focus (clinical chemistry or Klinische Chemie), while from 1967 to 1990 the main change was the inclusion of the term “clinical biochemistry” together with the initial “clinical chemistry”. A fundamental and relevant change appeared in 1991 when the journal assumed the name of “European Journal of Clinical Chemistry and Clinical Biochemistry” as requested by nine “western” societies, as well as by scientists from the eastern European countries. In its seminal Editorial titled “Clinical chemistry: A professional field for physicians and natural scientists in Europe” [2], Johannes Buettner underlined some major points of the discipline, including the evidence that it is interdisciplinary by definition, that is a professional field for physicians and natural scientists, and that qualified postgraduate training is mandatory. The take home message was the need for an agreed definition among professionals of the European Community as a starting point for recognition of the profession. However, I would like to point out that the first paper published following this Editorial was titled “Biochemistry and molecular genetics of muscle disease” [3], thus stressing the changing face of clinical laboratories that was finally recognized in 1998 when the journal was renamed “Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine”. This visionary decision by Gerard Siest recognized the international status of the journal, which in fact, is the official journal of the International Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (IFCC), in addition to being the official journal of the European Federation of Laboratory Medicine (EFLM). The name change also was in keeping with the desire to represent the current nature of our profession which is no longer limited to classical “clinical chemistry”.

The growth of the journal over the past 50 years is readily apparent from an increase in the submission of manuscripts and rise in the impact factor. In 2012, CCLM is more vital than ever, but this would not have been possible without the invaluable and inspired contributions of many scientists, particularly those individuals who have served as Editor in Chief of the journal and whose names are recognized in Table 2.

Publishing is, first and foremost, communicating. Over the centuries and particularly over the past decades, medical journals, including CCLM, have provided a forum for sharing and discussing new insights, divulging and promoting standardization and guidelines, and for publishing not only Original Articles but also Reviews, Opinion Papers, Letters to the Editor, Commentaries, Congress Abstracts and Proceedings of important scientific and medical meetings. In this way, CCLM has helped to prevent the loneliness of laboratory professionals around the world, sometimes creating collaboration and friendships between individuals who have previously never met. The Internet and other social media technologies have dramatically changed the way we access information. We no longer have to spend hours or days in libraries to obtain the printed information we require. Today, blogs, listserves, Twitter and other electronic media permit everyone an authorial voice, and increasingly influence what counts as medical
is still no definitive answer to many questions. First, how can we digest the increasing amount of information available on the Internet, and second, how can we assess the quality of the information itself?

Navigating many obstacles, CCLM needs to continue adapting to a changing environment [5], improve its ability to guarantee the quality of the peer-review process, maintain transparency in decisions regarding the rejection/acceptance of any paper, ensure the integrity of publications and avoid the risk of plagiarism and fraud. These tasks require the effort and cooperation of many stakeholders. Therefore, the celebration of the 50th anniversary is an opportunity to thank all Associate Editors, members of the Editorial Board, the huge number of valuable referees who have agreed to review manuscripts and are willing to spend the time evaluating the quality of submitted papers, and last but not least, our authors and readers. I truly hope that CCLM may continue to be a valuable source of knowledge and information for laboratory professionals first, but also for physicians and scientists around the world. Happy 50th anniversary!!

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