

J. Trop.Ped. in the 21st century

As we enter the new millennium and dust settles on the festivities, it is time to take a look at the challenges that lie ahead. We stand at the threshold of an exciting time in scientific development. Advances in the fields of genetics and molecular biology have created opportunities for understanding the building blocks on which life depends. The building blocks can be put together in a number of ways and for a variety of purpose. Some such as human cloning and genetically modified foods are ethically unacceptable to the society; others like new recombinant vaccines are proving to be highly beneficial and in demand.

Since its launch 46 years ago J.Trop.Ped. has been a popular venue for medical researchers for communicating their work to the scientific community at large. The Journal has always attempted to identify the growing points in medical science to keep its readers abreast of new developments. At the same time several seminal papers helped to provide the foundation on which global health programmes like UNICEF's GOBI and WHO's primary health care (PHC) came to be developed, and evaluated. Judging from the communication we receive from our authors, J.Trop.Ped would continue to remain in the foreseeable future the medium for scientific exchanges on which innovative health programmes can be based, and new health strategies evaluated.

A great deal has been said about disparities in income between the rich and the poor countries. But the differences in income are greatly exceeded by the inequalities in scientific output. Less than 20 per cent of the world's population lives in advanced economies, but produces more than 90 per cent of scientific publications. In the developing world there now exist several centres of excellence. But almost all are overburdened by professional demands, and chronically short of resources. The profound imbalance in the world's production of knowledge is the most powerful engine of divergence in health between the rich and the poor countries. It is also true to say that disparities in wealth stem from the same cause of disparity in the knowledge base.

In keeping with our avowed aim of encouraging scientific research and development of programmes for improving the health of mothers, children and families internationally, J.Trop.Ped. has commenced a number of on-line channels on the Journal's web site. All editorials would go on-line and would be freely accessible. They address the main issues of the day and are used increasingly for teaching purposes in many medical schools. Editorials also help to draw the attention of the scientific community to possible topics for research. Additionally, there is now an on-line channel devoted to continuing medical education, accompanied by images and text. A third channel for discussion groups has been commenced for our readers to engage in meaningful dialogue with authors of outstanding papers from a current issue of the Journal. Finally, there is a channel for open debate in

which discussion papers and readers' comments on burning issues will go on display. It goes without saying that publishers can only make facilities like J.Trop.Ped and web sites available. It is then left to the readers and authors to help shape the facilities to their best advantage. We look forward to our readers and authors contributing to build and shape J.Trop.Ped. in the new millennium.

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