

## Editorial

# CCLM: Evolving to meet the needs of today's laboratory professionals and scientists

"We were clinical chemists once ... and young". Now we are getting older and specialists in laboratory medicine.

Despite some historical roots, laboratory medicine is a young medical discipline and the rate of advances and changes in laboratory testing in the last decades has reached unprecedented levels.

A revolution is now expected to occur in the ever-changing scenario of medical laboratories thanks to the introduction of "omics" into clinical practice. The emergence of molecular diagnostics, proteomics, pharmacogenetics for health maintenance, prevention, early diagnosis, personalized therapy and monitoring of diseases has added greatly to the knowledge base of laboratory professionals. Over the years, *Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine* (CCLM) has evolved to reflect changes in the field of laboratory medicine, publishing articles addressing not only traditional clinical chemistry but also emerging areas, such as molecular diagnostics, clinical proteomics, pharmacogenetics and evidence-based medicine. However, a scientific journal cannot simply just reflect these changes, but instead must be able to anticipate changes in order to inform and educate professionals about the new scenario in which they have to practice their discipline. According to this concept, the first decision 10 years ago was to change the journal's name from *European Journal of Clinical Chemistry and Clinical Biochemistry* to *Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine*.

This change reflected both the evidence of a broader circulation of the journal in an era of "globalization" and exchange of experiences at an international level, as well as the changing role of the discipline. It should also be emphasized that during this same time, the International Federation of Clinical Chemistry (IFCC) decided to change its name to "International Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine", thus stressing the evolving role of clinical laboratories beyond clinical chemistry.

What is CCLM today and what should it be in the future?

First, CCLM is one of the leading journals in the field of laboratory medicine but, first and foremost, is a journal for laboratory professionals. While the Impact Factor (IF) of the journal represents a relevant issue, being a widely accepted indicator of scientific quality, the primary goal of CCLM's Editorial Board is not to increase it by adopting some "permitted make-ups" but to guarantee an updated and evidence-based source of information and knowledge for practicing professionals. In the last 10 years, the

impact factor of CCLM has risen from 1.084 in 1999 to 1.725 in 2006, and further increases are expected. However, the quest for being "the first of the second" among journals in the field of laboratory medicine was, and is not, the primary concern of the Editor-in-Chief and members of the Editorial Board. First and foremost, CCLM has to remain a tool for disseminating scientific information to laboratory professionals, and be a vehicle for making visible to a large audience the results of well-conducted research and scientific studies that result in reliable data useful for patient care.

The number of papers received for publication in CCLM has nearly doubled from 311 in 2000 to 555 in 2007. The journal has attracted an increasing number of highly qualified scientists and researchers in order to guarantee a comprehensive and objective review of manuscripts, and when appropriate, provide suggestions and recommendations to improve study design, statistical treatment of the data, and manuscript style. Due to the increasing number of manuscripts submitted to CCLM, it has become necessary to reduce the length of published papers, limiting those that are novel, timely, and of utility to members of the laboratory community. Thus, we find it necessary to exclude general animal or cellular studies, with the exception of those that describe interesting models of human disease. There are currently more than 40 editorial board members, specialized in various different aspects of our disciplines. CCLM, therefore, needs to focus on cutting-edge research in technologies and clinical applications of innovative markers. In addition, it needs to maintain a focus on traditional, but still not entirely solved issues, such as reference values, internal and external quality control, biological variability, pre-analytical variations, outcome studies, and evaluation of new diagnostic systems.

Second, CCLM is published in association with the IFCC, the European Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (EFCC), and is the official journal of some national Scientific Societies in Europe. CCLM is committed to publishing recommendations, position papers, IFCC and EFCC documents, and proceedings and abstracts of scientific meetings. Efforts to make CCLM more visible in the Americas and in the Asian-Pacific regions are in progress.

Third, CCLM will continue to attract more original physiopathological studies in the fields of cardiovascular disease, cancer, neurological diseases, and aging, based on omics biomarkers, with large enough numbers of patients and good clinical data for rapid translation in laboratory practice.

Fourth, CCLM is strongly committed to publishing reviews and mini-reviews that allow laboratory professionals to update their knowledge using "state-of-the-art" approaches to the diagnosis and management of highly prevalent medical conditions.

In order to achieve these objectives, some changes have been decided by the Steering Committee. The number of Associate Editors has been increased and specific duties have been assigned to each Associate Editor as follows: Mario Plebani (Italy) is Reviews Editor and responsible for the field of laboratory safety, Steve Kazmierczak (USA) is the new Letter Editor and his field of expertise are outcome studies, Ziyu Shen

(China) is responsible for the field of laboratory management and quality assurance, and Karl Lackner (Germany) is responsible for the field of cardiovascular diseases. We are now searching for two new Associate Editors for the fields of oncology and neurological diseases. With this new organization and teamwork, CCLM will be able to ensure a thorough and timely management of an increasing volume of manuscripts.

"The times they are a-changing" (Bob Dylan)

Gérard Siest

Mario Plebani