

Editorial

On the Road to an Impact Factor for *eCAM*

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Last year 2006 was indeed a fruitful year from many points of view and, mostly with respect to *eCAM*, attempts were made to broaden the scope of influence and to focus on what I deemed regions of *eCAM* strength. To that end, I spent nearly three months at the Institute for Advanced Studies, University of Bologna with Prof. Claudio Franceschi as my host—a convenient launching point that allowed interaction with eight other members of the Editorial Board in northern Italy (1). Another area that received some attention was the National Research Center, Dokki, Cairo, Egypt, where there is a wealth of activity especially using products from plants and animals. The Antiaging Meeting in Vienna was particularly enlightening and as with all meetings, my focus was on speaking the virtues of *eCAM* and thereby recruiting high-level papers. Why was the Vienna meeting unique? In contrast to other CAM/integrative conferences I have attended, the exhibitors and speakers did not center on chronic diseases but rather on a more esthetic, non-healing approach to antiaging.

Another area of high activity was witnessed at the 2nd World Congress of Ayurvedic Medicine held in Pune India. I was invited to give a Writer's Workshop along with *eCAM* Editorial Board member, Dr Alex Hankey. After three intensive lectures on the philosophy behind *eCAM* and the mechanisms of publishing in it, I then worked several hours with individuals who brought in manuscripts of varying lengths and quality of writing and presentation of results. Some were ready to be peer reviewed, whereas others required substantial revisions essential for a high-quality manuscript. It was my job to view them critically and to advise on the best strategy

for publishing in *eCAM*. The impact and enthusiasm in India was enormous and overwhelming. As a result, we have appointed seven new members to the Editorial Board.

Moving from India to Japan, we had very good and promising news at the *eCAM* family meeting. I call this our annual gathering of OUP from Japan with Patty Willis, and Prof. Nobuo Yamaguchi. We look seriously at the past year, problems, triumphs and where we go next. We listened to several reports from Akiko Tanaka (Commissioning Editor), Miki Matoba (Deputy Director) and Dr Toyoshi Onji (Journals Director). Indeed this meeting was most pleasant, productive and extremely upbeat from several points of view. First, there was the report of an astronomical burst of submissions at midyear. Second, we are increasing the rejection rate in order to improve quality. Third, we see an increase in more clinical papers. Fourth and most importantly, there are hopeful predictions of the long-awaited impact factor, that elusive number which seems to guide authors in their choice of where to submit manuscripts. Traveling the world, I even hear stories of universities that reward their faculty monetarily for publications in the high impact factor journals. Yet, seeing 'impact factor' from the other side of receiving manuscripts, my decades in science and the world of publishing urge prudence. Just as politicians lose their integrity by making decisions solely based on polling their constituencies, *eCAM* must continue to choose articles based on their intrinsic worth rather than their ability to attract references. In six or seven months, we will see if those directions have serendipitously shared common ground.

According to Toyosho Onji, *eCAM* appears to be 'nicely chaotic'! Contrary to what may appear at first glance to be derogatory, my vision of *eCAM*'s publications appears just as Onji puts it, as chaotic, but nicely! Chaotic of course is a word form of chaos. So what does it mean and imply for the appearance, inclusions and

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thrusts in *eCAM*? Chaos means disorder and its synonyms are: *confusion, bedlam, anarchy, pandemonium, commotion, disarray, turmoil, madness, mess and unruliness!* Of course the antonym for this is *order*, which means *neat, tidy*, just to name a couple of similar meanings. Now we ask the question, is there a sense of order to *eCAM*? Or is *eCAM* nicely chaotic?

By any way that we may interpret Onji's compliment in using the word chaotic, the vision for *eCAM* and what we have done in its publications, *eCAM* encompasses some of the meanings of chaos. In the common lexicon of CAM, one of *eCAM*'s efforts would hardly conjure bioprospecting, to use an oft-quoted example, yet this has been a major thrust for *eCAM*. In a few words, this course has been an attempt to redirect the invertebrate immunologist's past understanding of the invertebrate's immune system for its own sake (2–7) into the scope of CAM. This research focus has led to harnessing the antimicrobial peptides that invertebrates synthesize and secrete after challenge with antigens, some of which may be pathogenic, as new wave antibiotics or anticancer therapies. After all, invertebrates must be doing something right to have survived longer than most other animals including humans without pharmaceutically engineered CAM products. As we look to these animals whose survival speaks of their strength, we also encourage true scientific investigation into the crudely defined concoctions that have aided the ill in ancient cultures for thousands of years and survived in traditional medicines all over the world.

The vision for *eCAM* is to take those concoctions and apply to them the rigorous standards of evidence base and to unravel the sometimes-confusing scheme of CAM *qua* TCM, Ayurveda, Kampo, Unani, etc. Of course, if we follow the rules and regulations of what is laid down by the ancient healers of these practices, there are acceptable definitions as to what the components will do to alleviate symptoms. The problem is how to translate those ancient formulas into intelligible language amenable to the rigors of evidence-based analyses. Moreover, there is the inherent and obvious need to be certain that there is equivalence of the current biomedical terminology to its western allopathic definition. That is precisely the point. Start with the early principles of TCM, Ayurveda, Kampo and then subject these ancient disciplines and practices to rigorous analysis and an experimental strategy that uses the prevailing biomedical approach to human illness. Of course, the peak of a pyramid glows with the epitome, the gold standard, randomized clinical trials. As difficult as such an approach may seem, this strategy can be approached and partial answers sought through the utility of *in vitro* applications and results from the analyses using a multitude of available

and relevant animal models. After all, humans are related to the so-called lowly animals (some of which we revile, eat, spray with insecticides, etc.).

Finishing volume 3, 2006 has been momentous. The last three years of one decade in my life were also completed ushering in for 2007 another decade and volume 4. Some members of the Editorial Board were present at my momentous birthday December 23 and were here to celebrate: our graduate student member Shinji Kasahara (University of Washington). Aristo Vojdani, Mepur Ravindranath, Michel Tournaire and one non-member speaker from the Kanazawa Symposium, Arnie Loel. Other poignant messages were sent from Editorial Board members outside: Francesco Marotta, Andrea Cossarizza, Philippe Roch, Haruhisa Wago and Taras Usichenko. The celebration even began early in November in Kanazawa Japan with a dinner hosted by our indefatigable Founding Managing Editor, Prof. Nobuo Yamaguchi, naturally accompanied by abundant Beaujolais nouveau, which always seems to arrive with our coincident OUP family meeting. Of course, I cannot forget to offer special mention of champagne and my December flower narcissus, so generously sent *in absentia* by dear friend and *eCAM* colleague Patty Willis.

Chaos perhaps not, but diversity yes, witness every issue of *eCAM* from its inception through volume 3. We have emphasized biological approaches to CAM. After all, dealing with human problems is about life and should be inclusive of all life. That is what *eCAM* is about—life and knowing how it works at all levels will help us discover how to fix problems.

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