overcoming dogmatic barrier in neurosciences research: an applause for annals of neurosciences paradigm

Despite the huge resources that have been expended in spinal cord injury (SCI) research and human trials, there is yet no satisfactory clinical intervention. Our conventional interventions could not produce any significant improvement in neurological recovery or a meaningful increase in function. However the vast potential of phytomedicinal resources have been largely ignored in the search for SCI remedy. This results from the apathy that the effects of pharmaco-therapy especially of medicinal plants are not always evidence based medicine. Overcoming the dilemma of spinal cord and nerve injury requires open mindedness as exemplified by the focus of Annals of Neurosciences. It has provided a window of opportunities for non-mainstream approach in neuroscience research by its philosophy that encourages submissions of reports that challenges established dogmas thus enabling neuroscience investigations.

It is common knowledge that neuroscience research relatively attracts less interest among budding researchers in most developing counties.[1,2] Apart from the fact that basic neuroscience research generally requires more sophisticated device and tools, there also seems to be a paradigm predilection for works that employed some forms of cell and molecular biology techniques in their investigations. This is not unexpected as most breakthroughs in this field have employed molecular and cell biology techniques.[3] Unfortunately, in most developing countries, these advanced or specialized tools are not readily available. Hence up-and-coming researchers from developing countries do not drift towards neurosciences. Furthermore, the cover pages of most neuroscience journals do not display core or novel illustrations. This may be appreciated by some senior researcher but does very little to fascinate the young researcher into neuroscience research. This is, however, not the case for Annals of Neurosciences. This underlines the uniqueness of Annals of Neuroscience amongst Neuroscience journals in the world.

First, the cover pages of all its recent publications are not only rich of history but are also breathtaking. One in tempted to take another look at those cover illustrations. The need of more people opting for neurosciences research in their career needs no emphasis and Annals of Neurosciences appears to be taking a lead in this direction.

It is important also to extol the broad philosophy of Annals that encourages article submissions that are not mainstream neuroscience research. Annals of Neuroscience derives inspiration from its unique capacity to challenge dogma as it develops.[4] Inarguably, this philosophy provides a wide window for scientific dissertation and critique. There is hardly a wider window than what is boldly provided by Annals of Neurosciences. This is particularly relevant to spinal cord injury research since clinical trials that employ conventional mono or dual therapeutic agents have left more to be desired. These have not produced any notable improvement in neurological recovery or a meaningful increase in function.[5] Additionally, the current strategy of exploring multimodal therapeutic agents as a combined therapy for SCI is yet in an embryonic stage as we do not yet know what to combine, that would be effective and safe.[6] Researchers are thus encouraged to explore phytomedicinal applications in SCI recovery and restoration[7,8] since botanical products eliminate the fears of complications that combined therapeutic strategy of designer molecules or synthetic agents may exhibit since their active ingredients are already combined naturally. Experience has shown that it is difficult to gauge the occurrence of complications in human SCI trials.[9-11] This is particularly critical if we envisage combining several therapeutic agents in 'formulation', be it cellular and / or molecular applications including other synthetic agents or devices.[12]

Opponents of the use of medicinal botanicals charge that to protect the health and safety of the public, medicinal plant product (the so called dietary supplements) should be required to undergo the same safety tests as conventional drugs before release to consumers. Yet, the value of such testing for public health is sometimes questionable since FDA (USA) approved conventional prescription drugs are reported to cause over 100,000 deaths and 1.5 million hospital admissions each year.[13] In contrast, dietary supplements, not tested for safety by the FDA, cause only 5–30 deaths each year.[14] Therefore, overcoming the dilemma of spinal cord and nerve injury requires open mindedness. Annals of Neuroscience most be applauded for not been part of this dogma. It welcomes submissions of reports that challenges established dogma. This removes skewness by leaving no stone unturned in neuroscience investigations.

However, one query, though debatably about the publications of Annals of Neuroscience is the number of original or research articles published per volume, which are very scarcely more than ten. It is suggested that this be increased by about 50% to afford more researchers room for scientific dissertation and critique. This would ultimately boost the number of cited articles from her publications.

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