

Farewell from the Founding Editor

14 memorable years

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Dear Readers, Authors, Reviewers, and Friends,

Due to the increase in published research in the field of Neurosciences, there was a need to have a dedicated journal in our area, and in April 1996, together with Maj. Gen. Dr. Khalaf Al-Moutaery and Professor Basim Yaqub, I had the honor and opportunity to launch the Neuroscience Bulletin as a specialized journal, serving not only the Neurology community in the Kingdom, but in the Arab world. It is now in its 14th volume, and there have been so many major changes to the journal since that time, but really, it doesn't seem that long ago. It is with a mixture of sadness and joy that I now announce my retirement from this privileged position.

I have had so much help, guidance, and support over the years; it is truly difficult to know where to start expressing my appreciation and thanks. First and foremost to HRH Prince Sultan bin Abdul-Aziz, the journal's Patron, who has blessed and supported the journal from the very beginning. To General Ketab Al-Otaibi, the Editorial Director, and MSD Director, to the Department of Neurosciences, where it was originally published, and to the Administration of the Riyadh Military Hospital. Their support and confidence in the journal have been unwavering and constant.

To the authors, without whom the journal would cease to exist, I admire their continued struggle to publish in an ever-increasing competitive field,

when the pressure to "publish or perish" has never been more strongly felt. This is followed quickly by the excellent reviewers who have selflessly dedicated their time and energy to improving the quality of published research. Of course, to all the past and present members of the editorial team, the advisory and editorial board members.

To the dedicated editorial staff who are the very heart of the journal, and without whose help I would not have been able to succeed in my role, I offer my most humble and deepest thanks and appreciation from myself, and on behalf of the Journal and the Kingdom. And, in fact, everyone, who has ever taken a moment to pause, open the cover, and leaf through the journal's pages, I hope that we have managed to include something that has appealed and added to the wealth of medical literature that exists.

I would also like to give a special thanks to my dear friends George Bruyn and Robert Daroff for all their invaluable guidance and support over the years. Although George Bruyn is no longer with us, he is not forgotten, and still much appreciated.

Although I am leaving, I will be watching the journal's progress with continued interest and pride. I am comforted in the knowledge that it will continue to excel, and surpass its reputation as the leading Neurosciences journal in the Middle East. My door (and mobile!) will always be open to lend a listening ear, and to share the wealth of knowledge and experience that I have gained over the years.



As my successor, it is my privilege to introduce Brig. Gen. Saud Al-Omani, Director of Surgery, and Chairman of Medical Staff, Riyadh Military Hospital, as the new Editor-In-Chief of Neurosciences. While change in leadership can be difficult, I am confident that Dr. Al-Omani, with the assistance and expertise of Dr. Sonia Khan, the journal's hardworking and dedicated Associate Editor, will guide the editorial team safely through this, and the transition will be a smooth one.

The journal started as the Official bulletin of the Neurosciences Department, Riyadh Armed Forces Hospital, as a twice-yearly publication including articles and abstracts from related meetings. It quickly became a quarterly publication, and in addition to the regular issues, we have also published abstracts of proceedings and a number of supplements covering local and international meetings within the Neurosciences field.

In 1999, to celebrate the Centennial of Saudi Arabia we published a special Editorial on "Epilepsy towards the next millennium," we introduced the Radiology Quiz, and Dr. Moh'd Abed Al-Thagafi and Dr. Eman Bakhsh were appointed as Quiz Editors, and we also published abstracts from 5 related meetings that year.

In 2000, we established the journal's website (www.neurosciencesjournal.org), which now has an average of 13,000 hits daily, and where readers can access the full text of all articles published since the year 2000 in HTML and PDF format. In addition to articles, readers can also access the Table of Contents of upcoming issues, there is an advanced search engine, and a wealth of other information to help the author submit his article to the journal.

In 2002, the Journal was recognized by the Scientific Councils of different faculties in Saudi Arabia, as well as many Universities in the Arab countries worldwide. The journal was also indexed in EMBASE, the Excerpta Medical database, and the Elsevier BIOBASE (Current awareness in Biological Sciences). This year also saw the introduction of the PanArab Union of Neurological Sciences (PAUNS) newsletter, which published highlights on distinguished faculty from the Arab world, and details of national and international activities. Professor Jean Tamraz also took over the role of Quiz Editor in this year.

Also in 2002, we established a Quality Control Section and a member of staff was appointed to be

the Quality Control Officer (QCO) and act as an Ombudsman for the Journal. The Ombudsman's role is to: 1. Act as a spokesperson for authors and liaison between the authors and the editors. This role will be to deal with all grievances referred from manuscript authors, editors, and members of editorial staff. 2. To supervise the speed and proficiency of manuscript processing. 3. To supervise the quality of, and investigate any mistakes in, the printed journal. 4. To deal with all complaints from the readers of the journal regarding irregularities concerning any of the articles published. The introduction of the QC prompted the implementation of several new policy changes, which will continue to improve the excellence of the journal.

In 2003, we introduced a new feature to the journal, the Neurophysiology Quiz, and invited Dr. David MacDonald to be the Neurophysiology Quiz Editor. We also published 2 full supplements this year, and 4 supplements in 2004 in addition to the regular quarterly issues.

Due to my increasing responsibilities at MSD, in 2005 Dr. Sonia Khan was appointed as Associate Editor to the journal, and quickly took on the management of the day-to-day running of the journal.

The year 2006 was a historic moment for the journal, when the culmination of all the hard work of the family of Neurosciences including the Editors, Advisory and Editorial Board, the Editorial staff, and reviewers resulted in receiving approval for indexing by the Thomson Scientific (formerly known as Thomson ISI). This was an important step for the journal as it is now part of the international literature, available worldwide. This was achieved after thorough and prolonged improvement in the regular circulation of the journal, speeding up of manuscript acceptance and publication, and improving the style of presentation. Since then a significantly increased volume of scientific articles continues to be submitted to the journal by enthusiastic authors, a fact that enriches the scientific contents of the journal.

In 2007, in recognition of his continued support, and outstanding contribution to the journal we appointed Dr. Robert Daroff as Senior Consulting Editor to the Journal.

In 2008, the journal introduced its new look including a new cover and the introduction of Arabic abstracts. We also planned for the yearly production of a CD that includes all articles



published in PDF format for the previous year, 2007. A new web-based manuscript submission interface. To reduce the time from received to acceptance and acceptance to publication to no more than 3 to 4 months each. Attendance at regional conferences, and participation in academic activities to encourage submission of high quality articles. To encourage the editorial board members to solicit potential authors from conferences. Commission our best reviewers to write good articles and to encourage editorial board members to contribute material for a regular editorial feature on topical issues.

In 2008, we received a total of 155 manuscripts, with a monthly average of 13 and an average rejection rate of 29%. From these, we published a total of 100 articles, totaling 523 pages for the entire volume. Forty-nine percent of these were original articles. Fifty-eight percent of published articles were from the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR), with 30% from KSA, 5% from the Gulf, and 23% from other Arab and EMR countries. The remaining 42% of published articles we received from Canada, India, Japan, Malaysia, and Turkey. The average time from received to acceptance of original articles was 4 months and 4.9 months for acceptance to publication. Reasons for rejection included unrelated topics, poor contents, or duplicate publication. In addition to our 4 regular issues we also published a supplement of abstracts.

In the first 2 issues of 2009, we have introduced a number of new features, namely, highlights from international neuroscience meetings, regular basic neuroscience review articles, and 5 MCQ's on basic/clinical neuroscience. These features greatly enhance the journal and make it more attractive to trainees and board residents. In the future, the journal hopes to increase the number of issues to meet the increased load of manuscripts. Our objective is to enrich the scientific Neuroscience material presented by the journal with important topic reviews and regular neuroscience quizzes to achieve PubMed indexing.

Increasingly, over the last few years, the journal has had to deal with the burden of ethics

misconduct. Unfortunately, we have been faced with incidences of fraud, repetition (divided publication), duplicate publication, and plagiarism. This has now resulted in the journal adopting stringent screening of each and every paper published for plagiarism and duplicate publication, and implementation of policies for handling these ethical issues in accordance with internationally accepted standards. We also now insist upon submission of a manuscript that the authors declare if any part of the material exists elsewhere in a published form, or if similar material is under consideration by another journal.

To summarize, the journal is a well-respected peer-reviewed journal received by many Neurologists in the Arab countries and worldwide. It represents Neurosciences not in KSA but the whole region, and receives papers from all over the world. The goal of the journal has always been to report on the latest developments in clinical neurosciences and medical practice in the Middle East and the international community. Nearing its 15th volume, the journal still continues to enjoy an international reputation of excellence. Over the years the journal has improved in both content and circulation. The journal is now cited and indexed in Thomson Scientific, Embase, Excerpta Medica and Biobase, and available online at www.neurosciencesjournal.org.sa. The journal is well recognized in many academic and university institutes in the Arab countries and worldwide and has over 1500 subscribers. We encourage Neuroscientists to continue their support of our journal by sending Neurosciences publications to enrich the educational materials provided to the readers.

Success is not measured by what one brings, but rather by what one leaves behind. Our objective when we started was for the journal to not only be a media for publishing articles, but also a means of education and academic leadership, promoting original and significant research useful for our society and humankind. I hope that this legacy will continue for many years to come. The goodwill and prosperity that I now wish the journal, and my successor, is immeasurable.

Brigadier General Saud F. Al-Omani, MB ChB, FRCS (Ed), DIMC RCS (Ed).

- ◆ (2009 – up to date) Chairman of Medical Staff at Riyadh Military Hospital
- ◆ (2007 – up to date) Director of Surgery Department at Riyadh Military Hospital
- ◆ (2006 – 2007) Director of Medical Studies Department at Riyadh Military Hospital
- ◆ (1999 - 2002) Associate Clinical Professor in Surgery, School of Medicine, King Saud University
- ◆ (2000 - up to date) Examiner for the Royal College of Surgeons

