editors of JCBF overcame this problem by putting together an enormous supplement to the first volume containing over 300 abstracts of a major international meeting, thus ensuring that everyone in the field heard of the journal. The journal itself carries both original research papers and review articles, and the scientific standard and quality of presentation is high. The review articles in particular should prove indispensable.

Developmental Pharmacology and Therapeutics

The *International Journal of Clinical Pharmacology Research* is also a society journal, being published for the Italian Society of Clinical Pharmacology, but there parallels with the preceding two journals end. The quality of the papers does not match the eminence of the multinational editorial board, and there is little evidence of a refereeing process at work. Many papers are padded out with irrelevant detail and contain a minimum of original data; in addition there are frequent departures from the published instructions to authors.

Many authors might with advantage take note that several European languages are acceptable, and English is only preferred, not required. Frequent Italianisms are found — “plasmatic reninic activity”, “sinusal rhythm”, “heroin intoxication” — and many papers are merely intelligible, not fluent. There are no hints to the publication delay, but it took two years for some conference proceedings to be published in the first issue. At present two-thirds of the papers come from Italy, and the standards will need to be raised before this journal lives up to the “International” in its title.

After disasters with chloramphenicol and thalidomide, it became appreciated that the developing organism may not respond to drugs in the same way as the fully grown adult. The first issues of both *Pediatric Pharmacology* (PP) and *Developmental Pharmacology and Therapeutics* (DPT) carry editorials justifying this growing speciality and the issue of a new journal, DPT supporting its argument with an analysis of the journals that had previously carried material on pharmacology in the developing animal. So instead of 100+ journals, there are now 102+ for researchers to scan.

The material carried by these rival publications is very similar, being almost equally divided between animal and human studies and the great majority of papers coming from North America. Although papers are said to be subject to editorial review, it appears as if neither journal is able to be as selective as it would have liked; for instance, DPT seems to allow case reports to be presented as full original papers. Neither journal gives information on

publication delay, and both appear to have been struggling — PP produced only half the issues it had promised in 1980–1981 and DPT, although now managing eight issues per year rather than the six it started with, has, according to *Current Contents*, been months late with its recent issues.

Finally, *The Clinical Biochemist: Reviews* is a different type of journal, and unlike the others is not listed in *Current Contents*. It is published for the Australian Association of Clinical Biochemists and its main purpose is postgraduate education, with hints on passing postgraduate exams. As well as review articles it has a bibliography series, where the key papers in a field are listed and briefly reviewed. Interestingly, for most articles the name of the referee is given almost equal prominence to that of the author. Although written by Australians for their own consumption, it could prove helpful to chemical pathologists elsewhere, particularly those studying for higher exams. □

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Viral treatment

B.W.J. Mahy

Antiviral Research. Executive editors A. Billiau and E. De Clercq. 6/yr. (Elsevier Biomedical.) Dfl.220, \$88. *Journal of Interferon Research*. Editor William E. Stewart II. 4/yr. (Mary Ann Liebert, New York.) \$65 US, \$81 elsewhere (personal); \$135 US, \$151 elsewhere (institutional).

THE possibility that virus diseases might be controlled by drugs or treatment with interferon has been actively explored for the past 25 years. But although some antiviral drugs such as idoxuridine found their way into clinical use, treatment was confined to topical application because of their non-specific nature and associated side-effects. The advent of acycloguanosine in 1977 showed that specific, non-toxic treatment of some herpes virus infections was possible, and revived interest in antiviral chemotherapy. Interferon, too, remained a fascinating but highly esoteric subject for research until the recent application of biotechnology revealed the existence of multi-gene families of interferons with implications in many branches of biological science.

It is no surprise that these developments have caught the interest of publishers as well as of scientists. Other than the five established virology journals (*Archives of Virology*, *Intervirology*, *Journal of General Virology*, *Journal of*

Virology and *Virology*), the only outlet for papers in these areas has been provided by two antimicrobial journals which were started in the mid-1970s, namely *Antimicrobial Agents and Chemotherapy* and *The Journal of Antimicrobial Chemotherapy*. Neither journal has provided the right focus for antiviral papers, however, as their main emphasis has been on antibiotic studies.

Antiviral Research (AR) was launched from the Rega Institute in Belgium with a wide coverage, including not only antiviral chemotherapy and interferon research but also the development and clinical assessment of virus vaccines, and cellular and humoral immunity to virus infections. The latter areas are well represented in a number of immunological journals, but no doubt the publishers felt it wise that their infant should have as broad a base as possible.

Most of the papers so far published have dealt with antiviral drugs or interferons, but several useful papers and review articles on cellular immunity mechanisms have also appeared. However the journal has not yet attracted the sort of key papers on antiviral drugs and their mechanisms of action for which it should ultimately become the forum: these still appear in more general science journals. AR is nonetheless well produced and has some distinguished scientists associated with the editorial board; it can be recommended as a journal likely to survive and find a permanent home on medical library shelves.

The *Journal of Interferon Research* (JIR) has more limited appeal. It was launched in the belief that it would provide “the primary source for original publications on all the varied aspects of interferon research”. Apparently some interferon papers had received little understanding from the better established journals. The large editorial board includes seven members who also serve on the board of AR; the contentious nature of interferon research is illustrated by the instruction that “authors will be allowed to indicate one reviewer who should be excluded from review of their manuscript”.

After a faltering start with only one executive editor, the editorial board have recently elected seven section editors from among their number, which should speed up the reviewing process. But the papers published so far lack general scientific interest, and it is difficult to envisage much immediate improvement in this respect. It is also a pity that the paper on which the journal is printed is of poor quality, making for problems in the interpretation of half-tones. It is hard to escape the conclusion that the JIR has too slender a base to support itself for long in the hard economic world of publishing. □

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