

Immunity, impunity

Frances M. Brodsky

Immunity. Editor Benjamin Lewin. *Cell Press*. 12/yr. USA \$385, elsewhere \$455 (institutional); USA \$95, elsewhere \$165 (personal).

THE several definitions of the word 'immunity' all refer to a state of privileged exemption from rules and regulations, from natural and physical dangers or from social obligations and constraints. These definitions seem applicable to the new journal *Immunity*. In his inaugural editorial article, Benjamin Lewin explains that the title *Immunity* means that coverage will extend "beyond the formal definition of immunology, and into all systems that contribute to, or interact with, the immune response of the organism". Another stated goal is to explore the cutting edges of immunology, but not necessarily to be comprehensive. Work published in *Immunity* is thus to enjoy privileged exemption from traditional constraints.

During its first 18 months, *Immunity* has been successful in accomplishing these goals and has been well received by immunologists. A privileged offspring of Cell Press, the journal was born with a silver spoon in its mouth and some of its success is attributable to good breeding. The papers have the same top-quality sexy appearance of those in *Cell*, and a 3-6-month turnaround from submission to publication. The mini-reviews, like those in *Cell*, are topical, concise and written primarily by leaders in the field. *Immunity* has been launched with strong submissions from its stellar editorial board, setting a standard for high-quality publications.

The papers in *Immunity* contribute significantly to immunology, but are marginally too specialized for the popular general journals. The well-established *Journal of Experimental Medicine* has long provided this forum for immunologists, and in a recent revitalization has broadened its scope and bias from traditional cellular and disease-related immunology to include molecular immunology. The contents of *Immunity* look like a selective raid on the contents of *Journal of Experimental Medicine*, picking out the more trendy papers with molecular orientation. *Immunity* also covers some systemic immunology, a field beginning to benefit from knockout and transgenic systems. Interestingly, the raid by *Immunity* has not depleted the number of top-quality papers in *Journal of Experimental Medicine*, whose contents (about triple that of *Immunity*, which plans not to exceed 15 papers per issue) are supplemented by solid, informative papers that are still a cut above the good, but pedestrian fare in the *Journal of Immunology*. The availability

of fodder for *Immunity* suggests it has filled a niche.

In their respective introduction and conclusion to the proceedings of the 1989 Cold Spring Harbor symposium on immunology, both Charles Janeway and Jonathan Howard perceived immunology as entering a new era, following the resolution of several of its great mysteries.

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Protecting veil: coloured scanning electron micrograph of a human lymphocyte. The microvilli projecting from the cell surface play a part in cell motility.

That new era is reflected in the content of

Immunity. With some understanding of the molecular and genetic basis for immunity, the void between phenomenological and 'paradigm'-setting papers can now be filled. Some might say that the excitement has gone, whereas others would say that the field has matured to a state of real experimentation instead of relying on description, theory and serendipity. *Immunity* is publishing papers from those areas of experimentation that are being most hotly explored. Although an immunologist should still consult *Journal of Experimental Medicine* and *Journal of Immunology* for breadth and depth, *Immunity* represents a finger on the pulse of the field.

There are two other definitions of 'immunity' that raise a cautionary note regarding this journal and others of its type. 'Ecclesiastical immunity' refers to sanctuary from invasion by secular armies. Possibly because of its title, *Immunity* may evade readers outside the field, such as cell and developmental biologists who would find some of its papers relevant. Finally, an obscure use of the word 'immunity' (attributed by the *Oxford English Dictionary* to Latimer's sermon before Edward VI in 1549) warns of potential consequences of extreme pressure to publish. "There is sum place in London, as they saye *immunitie, impunitie*. What should I call it? A preueleged place for whoredom." Fortunately, this definition does not apply to *Immunity* or, hopefully, to the other new journals reviewed here. □

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