

Letter from Abel Lajtha on Occasion of the 40th Anniversary of Neurochemical Research

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We are happily justified in celebrating that *Neurochemical Research* reached its 40th year of publication. For most of us, 40 years (which is greater than that for a generation), may also well be the time span in which one is engaged in doing scientific research. It also means a significant period during which we can advance our knowledge, even a significant period for developing changes in our approaches in our methodology, but although still only a small period for science. For our discipline, neurochemistry, this was a significant time, a period of major growth in popularity, a major growth in scientists choosing its approaches, a significant increase in collaborations, and the merging of several branches of neuroscience that allowed growing beyond a narrow view of a highly specialized discipline.

The journal started at a time when neurochemistry reached its adulthood. Journals, laboratories, institutes,

departments, specialist and subspecialist societies, books, and symposia had embraced it, and recognized its potentials, and throughout the following 40 years, our journal, *Neurochemical Research*, supported and added to the dissemination of the progress in the field. The progress of knowledge of the field was spectacular in this period; processes, mechanisms thought to be beyond our approach and beyond our ability to understand, were not only examined, but our understanding them was greatly increased. I must though emphasize the old wise saying that, with increased knowledge comes increased understanding of how much more we do not know, how much more needs understanding beyond present knowledge. Our and the following generations will not run out of problems waiting to be solved, questions needing an answer.

In some way, from its beginning and continuing, this journal has tried to be different. Instead of being proud of rejecting many submitted papers and getting a reputation for being exclusive, our motto was that rejecting a paper is easy, advising on how to improve one to make it acceptable is more difficult, but in the long-run helps the discipline and its contributors more. It makes the editors and referees contributions to research more significant, to which our board can be proud of their past work, even if this represented a significant burden on the editors and referees. I am very grateful for all their efforts, and I am sure our authors appreciated their constructive criticisms and positive contributions. Among other important contributions of the Journal were its numerous special issues honoring outstanding neurochemists. Many by now are not with us, but all deserved recognition. The journal indicated the need for society to increase its recognition and the support of neuroscience in general, and specifically the increased appreciation of many outstanding neurochemists.

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Changes in our time are very many, occurring very rapidly. I would like to briefly select three important ones. Probably deserving the first place is the spectacular advance in our understanding of neural mechanisms. While I think that much more remains to be discovered compared to what we know, probably less contribution in the future can be expected from pure chemical analysis. We have identified most of the major chemical components of the nervous system. The future requires the utilization of multiple techniques in addition to chemical, biologic, cellular pharmacologic, genetic, histologic, anatomic, physiologic techniques, and the collaboration of experts. Not enough to concentrate on pure neurochemistry, but the advance in understanding neurochemical mechanisms, creating techniques and instruments is indeed impressive.

For the second change that I select, that must be felt by many of us, is the dwindling financial support of neuroscience research. The growth in scientists and the need for even more sophisticated instruments has not been paralleled by a similar growth in financial support. The young scientists of today face more difficult circumstances than young scientists faced 40 years ago: jobs, laboratories, grants, promotions. Funding is ever more competitive and possibly less secure. Life for especially our young neuroscientists is still exciting, important, and enjoyable, but not as easy, compared to when *Neurochemical Research* started 40 years ago.

To pick a third field of rapid change that occurred during the 40 years of our journal, I ought to mention past and future changes in publishing. Forty years ago journals were printed on paper, stacked on the shelves of libraries, and finding results required a visit to those shelves. I feel those shelves are going out of use (probably have gone out already). Publishing on paper is on its way out, and

computers replace anything that was on those shelves. Is this advance? Yes, very much so. It requires much less time and effort to find necessary information, but in a sense we rely on those preparing the indexes. Possibly *Neurochemical Research* will undergo such changes and in the not so far future it will not be on anyone's shelf, but downloaded on a tablet computer.

Having been the Editor-in-Chief for the first 36 years of the journal indicated that I felt that it deserved dedicating part of my scientific life to the journal, and that it has an important role and it contributes to the advancement of the field, and that it deserves my and the editors and referees support and help. I know that our present Editor-in-Chief, Arne Schousboe, and the members of his editorial board share this view, even as it requires the time and effort of busy committed researchers. I feel this help is just as important today as it was 40 years ago, and it will be so in the next 40 years. I appreciate and want to thank all who were, are, and will be connected to *Neurochemical Research* in any manner, and wish continued success and happiness over the next 40 years of the continuation to our journal. Most importantly the journal has not only a board who's most members joined a great many years ago and keep serving productively the field and the journal very well. *Neurochemical Research* is very lucky now to be guided by its current Editor-in-Chief Arne Schousboe, one who not only is a brilliant scientist of great knowledge and expertise, but also a kind, creative, willing leader who will maintain the level, integrity and contributions of *Neurochemical Research*. The old traditions are continued, improved and we or our successors can look forward to the next 40 years of neuroscience and of our journal.

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