AVCC 1990–2015 – A journal to combine antiviral biology and antiviral chemistry enters the third era

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Antiviral Chemistry and Chemotherapy (AVCC) was founded in 1990 by Blackwell Scientific Publications. AVCC was launched with a triumvirate of editors and John Oxford was appointed as the first Editor-in-Chief supported by Graham Darby, Hugh Field with Mike Otto (initially as Associate Editor) representing the USA. Thus, for the first few years the home of the journal was at the London Hospital, Whitechapel Road, East London. From the outset, AVCC placed much emphasis on synthetic chemistry and the journal title had been carefully chosen to reflect this approach in an attempt to foster mutual understanding between the pure chemists with biological interest and virologists. Indeed, in the early years, the “instructions for authors” caused considerable consternation among chemically minded contributors who tended to favor a combined Results and Discussion section and were reluctant to give their chemical “schemes” figure numbers – matters that were eventually amicably resolved. The first dedicated “Chemistry” editor was Christopher McGuigan from Cardiff University appointed in 2000 to be succeeded in 2006 by his colleague, Andrea Brancale.

In 1991, Shiro Shigeta from Fukushima University, Japan joined the editorial team to become the first Associate Editor representing the Far East to be ably succeeded on his retirement in 1998 by Masanori Baba from Kagoshima, and in 1996, Robert Sidwell from Utah State University, was added as a second US Editor followed on his retirement in 2007 by Donald Smee from the same institution. In 1996, John Mills was appointed as the first reviews editor. Scholarly reviews have always been one of the strengths of AVCC and in the early years several unique reviews, e.g. one on the metabolism and disposition of acyclovir in the tissues of different species by de Miranda and Good^{1,2} and another memorable review from these early years concerned the prospects of antiviral therapy in veterinary species Rollinson.^{3,4} The depth of these reviews was reflected in the fact that each required splitting into two parts spread over two issues. To some extent, this set the trend for in-depth reviews that have characterized the journal over its entire lifespan. The first reviews editor, John Mills moved into a new

field and was succeeded by Anthony Vere Hodge; the final addition to the editorial team was Laurence Tiley, Cambridge.

The first major change to the running of the journal occurred at the end of 1996 when, Blackwell Science, after a review of their portfolio of journals, decided to discontinue publication of AVCC and the journal was then acquired by Steven Cameron for the London publisher, International Medical Press (IMP). After a thorough makeover, a much-modernized version of AVCC commenced publication by IMP in January 1997. This turned out to be the start of an extremely happy relationship; the IMP editorial staff having always given the journal enormous support as evidenced by the consistent excellence of the copy-editing and the high quality of the final production. We also acknowledge the importance of the support received over the life of the journal (under both Blackwell Science and IMP) from an extremely loyal and hard-working international editorial board.

From the outset, each issue of the journal featured a color photograph on the front cover. During the early (Blackwell Science) years these were supplied with a suitable explanatory caption by one of the authors publishing in the issue. Perhaps the most unusual was the original artwork supplied by Anthony Vere Hodge showing the mechanism of action of famciclovir in the form of a “Heath-Robinson” cartoon.⁵ This required permission from Duracell UK for the use of the colors of their long-life batteries to depict the phosphorylation steps in the activation of the nucleoside. Latterly, the artwork on the cover was produced in-house by IMP including some striking and imaginative antiviral images up to the final paper edition of the journal in 2009. From 2010 onwards (reflecting the current trend), the journal became available only in electronic form rendering the cover illustration redundant to the slight regret of the early editors.

During the course of its history, AVCC published several very successful special supplement issues. Most notable of these was probably supplement 1 in 1993 entitled “Famciclovir/penciclovir: pharmacology and pharmacokinetics workshop”. This is a comprehensive account of the preclinical development of the

antiherpes oral prodrug, famciclovir up to that time. Another landmark around the same period occurred when AVCC successfully concluded negotiations to become an official journal of the International Society for Antiviral Research (ISAR) with a preferential subscription rate for ISAR members. In recent years, the journal published the ISAR News including the comprehensive scientific meeting report on the International Conference on Antiviral Research that is hosted annually by ISAR. Another venture undertaken during this time was the publication of the Antiviral Factfile⁶⁻⁹ which comprises a compendium of antiviral molecules with current or past practical utility that is organized by virus target with the systematic name, structure, indications and opinionated comments on each compound together with an early and a recent citation. Although the FactFile approach may have been largely superseded by the availability of rapid internet searches, we believe that the FactFile still remains a special resource and one that will perhaps re-emerge in a new electronic guise?

Sometime during its middle years, the publication date of several issues was delayed and as a result the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) decided to withdraw the citation index from the journal. This turned out to be a serious blow from which the journal never fully recovered and, from that time, it became increasingly difficult to obtain sufficient flow of quality submissions to maintain the health of the journal. IMP decided in 2013 that the journal would cease the following year after enjoying a total run of 24 years from its launch. The run-down process was nearly completed when the Editors learnt in the Autumn of 2014 that Sage Publications UK proposed continuing publication of AVCC. We are delighted that Sage brings to our journal the power of a major publisher of scientific literature with an existing portfolio comprising more than 800 journals including those of more than 300 learned societies and institutions.

Thus, AVCC is now entering a third era and the one that promises to be the most exciting of all. The journal will continue with the same "aims and scope" and will retain the general structure for articles. Furthermore,

the Editors and publishers are determined to maintain our established high standard of timely peer-review and manuscript processing. The involvement of Sage promises to foster new developments and innovations that will reinvigorate AVCC in the coming months. As we commence the year of our 25th anniversary we can reflect on a happy history and look forward eagerly to a bright future.

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On behalf of the Editors