

Editorial

Old challenges, new hope?

In this issue, we are delighted to have Professor John McGrath's contribution of his review article on filaggrins in skin barrier genetics. Professor McGrath is one of the international pioneers in molecular biology research and is a respected mentor to many local dermatologists who have studied in St John's Institute of Dermatology in the United Kingdom. This kind of review article on molecular biology is seldom received by our Journal as most local research is focused on the clinical aspects rather than on basic scientific research or molecular biology, which is the foundation and current trend in many medical specialties. Most of the innovative therapies developed are based on this kind of research. A good example is the biologics which are the products of molecular biology.

However, research and development (R&D) of molecular biology requires a lot of investment, not to mention the huge amount of manpower and installation of sophisticated equipment. All these require the most basic and essential element-financial support which is scarce in our specialty, especially in the public sector as the Social Hygiene Service is mainly service-orientated. How can our trainees overcome such a major obstacle? Thanks to the thoughtful vision of our former Chairman, Dr Ho King-man, a research scholarship has been established for the members of The Hong Kong Society of Dermatology & Venereology. Although the amount is not substantial, it is the opening gambit by a non-government organization towards this untouched area. Is there any funding for this kind of research from our government? Actually, there is, depending on how hard one wants to explore and the nature of the project. Recently, a dermatologist in private practice informed me that there was a dermatology-related research project being conducted, and that it was funded by the Innovation Technology Fund from

our government. It was about the development of hygienic socks for patients with tinea pedis through micro-encapsulation technology. The funding was quite substantial. If one has a good idea which can be transformed into a practical application, there are many such research fundings and scholarships available.

As pointed out by our former chief editor, Dr Tang Yuk-ming in his editorial in the 2007 Summer issue of Hong Kong Journal of Dermatology & Venereology, another old issue facing our Journal is the diminishing number of manuscripts from local contributors and decreasing financial support to our Journal. The situation in the past few years has not improved, if not worse. Fortunately, our global colleagues are very enthusiastic, particularly those who are ethnic Chinese in origin. One of them is Professor Stephen Lee from Australia who has been very supportive in contributing various articles to our Journal in recent few years. In order to facilitate the function of our journal as an international media, we have now officially opened our e-journal webpage to the public. In this way, we hope that it will encourage more renowned international and local scholars to submit their manuscripts to our Journal. As the target readers of our e-journal is now broadened, it may help to recruit more advertisements to support not only the routine functioning of our Journal but may even contribute to the funding of local research through the newly established research scholarships in our Society. Rome was not built in one day. We hope that these small steps can trigger a big leap in the local development of dermatology and venereology. Nothing can be achieved without your generous support.

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