The Year of the Wise Monkeys

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By the time you read this journal, we will all be well into our various holiday seasons, both in the cold in the Northern Hemisphere, and in the (enviable) heat in the Southern Hemisphere, so on behalf of the Laser Therapy Editorial Team I hope that for all our Laser Therapy readers, your festive season was suitably festive. Furthermore, the Team and I wish you and yours all the very best for 2016: may it be all you could wish for and more, and bring you every happiness and the best of health!

This issue of the journal sees out the Year of the Ram in the Oriental 12-animal Zodiac and ushers in the Year of the Monkey. Readers born in 1908, 1920, 1932, 1944, 1956, 1968, 1980, 1992 and 2004 are all Monkeys. Like their world-of-nature counterpart, zodiacal Monkeys are happy, but sometimes mischievous creatures. Of course, the most famous trio of monkeys who see (Mizaru), hear (Kikazaru), and speak (Iwazaru) no evil, are found in a 17th Century carving in the famous Toshogu Shrine in Nikko, the city which gives its name to the beautiful national park to the north of Tokyo.

According to tradition, zodiacal Monkeys are smart, clever and intelligent, especially in their career and wealth. They are lively, flexible, quick-witted and versatile. In addition, their gentleness and honesty bring them prolonged romantic attachments. On the other side of the balance, however, although Monkeys were born with enviable skills, they still have several shortcomings, such as an impetuous temper and a tendency to look down upon others. So if this is your year, may it do you well, with concentration on the positive side!

Reflections

In this issue of the journal, I would like to look back at what has happened in 2015 which has relevance to Laser Therapy. First of all, it was the year that was recognized by the United Nations as the International Year of Light and Light-based Technologies, and a good number of laser-related meetings were acknowledged as being part of this homage to light as not only the source of our lives, but as a powerful force to heal, to cure and to ease pain. Of particular interest to us as Laser Therapy aficionados and aficionadas were the Laser and Aesthetic Europe 2015 meeting in Athens, Greece, in June, under the baton of Dr Paraskevas Kontoes; the 6th congress of the International Phototherapy Association (IPTA) in Nice, France, in July, under the baton of Professor Carlo Fornaini; and the 21st meeting of the International Society for Laser Surgery and Medicine (ISLSM), in Indore, India in August, under the baton of Dr Sharon Rau. All three meetings were a success, and we can look forward with them to a bright future for laser medicine and surgery.

This brings me to my next point. As technology progresses, so do its applications in medicine and surgery. Of course, in Laser Therapy we tend to concentrate on the laser-based aspects, but a wide world is opening up beyond laser. First and foremost is the surge of interest in light-emitting diode (LEDs), and I am proud to say that we were amongst the first to recognize this some 10 years ago when Professor Kendric C Smith suggested that we were no longer correct in using the acronym LLLT for low level laser therapy, under the same acronym. A number of keynote papers on LED-LLLT have appeared in the journal over that decade, and indeed before it.

However, other aspects of non-laser-based medicine have also appeared and we have seen a surge of interest in energy-based medicine, with radiofrequency systems taking technology one step further with
microneedle electrodes delivering precise electrocoagulation in the dermis without any thermal damage to the epidermis. These systems usually work at frequencies of 1 – 5 MHz, but a new set of higher frequency systems are appearing delivering electric current at frequencies of over 20 MHz, in other words, approaching the microwave frequency, which are finding good applications in minimally invasive and highly selective adipolysis. Laser Therapy should be open to these new indications, even if they are not laser-based, because they are all part of the electromagnetic spectrum.

Finally, you can see that this is the fourth and final issue of Volume 24 of the journal. Next year will see the publishing of Volume 25, a quarter of a century of actual volumes. In fact, Laser Therapy has been on the march since 1988, so it’s now officially more than 25 years old. However, as many of you will remember, there was a brief hiatus around the turn of the Millennium so we lost a couple of years until we saw Laser Therapy rise like the Phoenix from its ashes with the second Pilot Issue. Thanks to the diligence and hard work of our excellent Laser Therapy Editorial Team, in cooperation with our aggregator, J-STAGE, the total contents of all issues of the journal are now available electronically online, with free downloads available of full portable document format (PDF) versions of all articles and Editorials, except those articles younger than 6 months old. This is a staggering achievement, and if you take the time to call up some of these earlier volumes and read the contents, you will be surprised how “up to date” some of the earlier articles are. When this vast repository of laser-related literature was coupled with our acceptance for indexing by PubMed Central, it made an enormous difference in the number of citations of articles in Laser Therapy which were hitherto unavailable to the researcher or clinician. I am humbly proud to think that I had the honor to be the Founding Editor, and am still entrusted with the task of Editor-In-Chief. Thank you all for your support, and especially for your papers … no papers, no journal.

Ohshiro - Laser Therapy Award

With this issue of the journal, the final entries to our two very generous sets of awards for good medically-scientific writing will be collated, added to those in the previous 3 issues, and sent out to our international team of assessors to choose the lucky winners. You will remember that the original Laser Therapy Award for the one Best and two Good Papers expired, so I stepped in to make sure this award would continue, changing the name to the Ohshiro – Laser Therapy Award. Because of the turmoil in the money markets, the value of the Japanese yen has been changing sporadically. Whereas Prof Ming-Chien Kao has always offered his awards in US dollars, our award was offered in Japanese yen, so the value has fluctuated in accord with the market fluctuations. Taking this into account, we have decided to offer or cash prizes also in US dollars: US $4,000 for the Best Paper, and two awards of US $1,500 each for the Good Papers awards to end confusion and set the benchmark for future awards. We will eb announcing the winners in the first issue of our 25th volume in March of next year, so if you haven’t managed to get a paper published in this 24th volume then I’m sorry to say you’re not in the running for this coming set of awards. Therefore, get writing for inclusion for Volume number 25 in 2016. As it says in the Award announcement elsewhere in this issue … “You’ve got to be in it to win it”.  

Asian Pacific Association for Laser Surgery and Medicine (APALMS) 2016

As readers will remember, following the successful 14th APALMS meeting in Taiwan, we had high hopes for the 15th meeting in Singapore, planned for November 2014. Unfortunately, the state of the world-wide financial situation drastically curtailed the number of exhibitors and pre-registrations, so the President-Elect and Congress President, Professor Fong Poh Him, took the sad but understandable step of cancelling the meeting. Prof Fong passed the baton to a well-known medical laser stalwart in the Asian-Pacific area, Professor Peter Hasan of Indonesia. Despite not enjoying the best of health, Prof Hasan has risen in his usual admirable fashion to the challenge, and has passed the cape on to Professor Abraham Arimuku who is the APALMS President-Elect, and 16th Congress President. Plans proceed apace, with the dates of the meeting set for September 16th – 18th of 2016. As details become available, they will appear here, but please block these dates out in your diaries. Indonesia has become a burgeoning powerhouse in the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) region with exploding interest in laser and light in surgery and medicine, so I believe we will have a fantastic meeting. There are plans to hold an International Laser Licensing System (ILLiS) course at this meeting, the full details of which should appear in the next issue of the journal, so for those wishing to consider participation in this worthwhile and exciting event, please watch this space.
End Notes

Of course, this year has not been all light. The recent terrible and deadly events in Paris and San Bernadino have cast a pall over the bright spots of this year, and our thoughts and prayers are with all the victims and their families. Extreme weather patterns have wrought major damage and brought severe flooding to many countries, displacing hundreds if not thousands of people from their homes. However, as we approach the year end with its promise of renewal and rebirth, we must take hope that 2016 will be a better year for us all, so that the upbeat events of the year can shine out clear and bright. Never forget that the journal cannot exist without you, and in particular, without your papers. We need to maintain the high standard which gained us our PubMed Central listing, and the only way we can do that is with a constant supply of high-quality papers. Please consider Laser Therapy for your next clinical or basic study, case reports, or other brief communications. Thank you all for your support in 2015, and please continue to keep the Laser Therapy flag flying in 2016. Simply having a paper accepted means that you will be in the running for one of our Awards, either the Ming-Chien Kao Award for Young Scientists, or our own Ohshiro - Laser Therapy awards for the best and two good papers. Get writing!

Tokyo, December 2015