Quo Vadis?

As I write this Editorial for the last issue of Volume 5, tremendous changes are taking place which will dramatically affect the future of *Laser Therapy*. Due to circumstances beyond their control, John Wiley and Sons of Chichester have regrettably decided that they can no longer afford to continue as the publishers of the journal. They cite rising costs and falling subscriptions. The rising costs we are certainly aware of, as the cost of the journal to the normal subscriber has increased from \$175 in Volume 1 (1989) to \$225 for Volume 5 (1993), an increase of over 25%. On the face of it, taken over 4 years this does not appear to be such a large increase. However, *Laser Therapy* is the official journal of the ILTA (International Laser Therapy Association), and as such ILTA members receive the journal as one of the privileges of membership, and these rising costs have necessitated an annual increase in the membership fees for the association. Even though some of the increase was absorbed by the association, which in turn meant less revenue for the ILTA, the rising cost of membership has taken its toll, and the ILTA has also been faced with a drop in membership with members declining to renew their membership, and hence their subscriptions to the journal have also lapsed.

This is a very sad situation, and given the international recession which is biting at all industries at the moment, it is inevitably understandable. I would like to take this opportunity to thank John Wiley & Sons for a very enjoyable association. Wiley were very courageous in taking up the challenge of producing the first journal devoted entirely to papers on laser therapy and photobioactivation, at a time when LLLT was really just emerging as a new clinical and scientific subspeciality from the mists of scepticism. It is a great shame that Wiley have to let the journal go at a time when the future of LLLT seems very bright, as seen by the very ambitious Barcelona meeting in May of 1994 which will incorporate the next congresses of the ILTA and the ISLAM (International Association for Laser Applications in Medicine). Additionally the journal is finally approaching its actual publishing schedule, for the first time since it started, and this too must have sent a message to existing and potential subscribers during the last few months.

Some words of appreciation are required here, and I am joined in these by my Associate Editor, Dr Glen Calderhead, who has also been with the journal from the beginning and has put in so much effort to ensure its continuing success. We would like in particular to thank Mary Lawrence, of Wiley's Production Department, who was with us from the conception and inception of the journal, had a brief

spell away, and returned to take the journal under her impressive control again in late spring 1993 with the result that we saw 4.4 and 5.1 come out within a fortnight of each other, followed after just over a month by 5.2. At the time of writing, 5.3 is getting ready for going to press, and we are filling up this issue (5.4) in a pleasingly steady fashion. The problems of paper flow which plagued the journal in its infancy have at last started to ease, although they are by no means over.

Glen and I would also like to thank John Wiley & Son's UK Managing Director, Dr John Jarvis, and congratulate him on achieving that post in May 1993. We just regret that one of his unpleasant duties after assuming the mantle of leadership was to have to cut off *Laser Therapy*, but as the saying goes, it's tough at the top! It was through Dr Jarvis's enthusiasm for and belief in the concept of LLLT that Wiley boldly started to publish the journal, and indeed the first books on LLLT (*LLLT: a Practical Introduction* and *LLLT: Practical Application*): these heady days of 1988 seem so far away now. There are many others in Wiley who have helped in some way, but we must say a special word of thanks and sincere appreciation to Verity Waite of the Natural Sciences Publishing Division for her constant support and efforts on the journal's behalf, especially at the beginning. John, Mary and Verity represent for us the very best in all aspects of publishing, and we are pleased and proud to be counted amongst their colleagues and friends. We would also like to thank all concerned at John Wiley & Sons for their great help in the transition period as we move from Wiley to our next publisher.

However, as Editor-in-Chief, I have to ask of the journal in the title of this last editorial in Volume 5, 'Quo Vadis?', 'Whither goest thou' in its literal translation. (*The Bible*, The Book of Revelations, *Ev. S. Joann.* 16.5). We can extend the spirit of that question to ask where *Laser Therapy* and all of us connected with the journal are going, and at the moment, I have to say that I don't really know, as far as the journal is concerned. At the time of writing, several publishers have been approached, and there has been some solid interest in taking over *Laser Therapy* and publishing it under a colophon other than the well-known and well-respected Wiley mark. The interest has not yet been translated into tangible action, however, but I can assure all readers of the journal, both private subscribers and ILTA members, that both Glen Calderhead and I are doing our very best to make sure that the strong tradition of the journal, only now emerging, and its gathering momentum are not lost. We will do our utmost to ensure the continuation of *Laser Therapy* with as

short a hiatus as possible, so that with Volume 6 we can enter 1994 with a new publisher, but with the same strong commitment to scientific excellence in the papers which we have maintained throughout the five issues already published, and will continue on into Volume 6.

I would also like to thank all the active members of our Editorial Board for their support, and for the papers they have sent from themselves and their colleagues. When I wrote to them with the news of the journal's impending demise as a Wiley publication, I got many warm letters of support and promises of increased activity. Hopefully these will help us make *Laser Therapy* an even more solid and interesting proposition for the new publishers, whoever they might be, and an even better journal for the readership. I promise you, *Laser Therapy* will continue!

I said earlier that paper flow has increased. This does not mean that we do not need papers. In fact, I hope that we will be able to go on to our new publisher with a better stock of papers than we have ever had before, because nothing will help the journal more than being able to appear on time. Thus any surplus of papers after the 5.4 has gone to press will be passed on immediately to the new publishers.

All new journals go through a teething stage, and it is generally accepted that 5 years is the usual settling-in period. That is certainly the case with *Laser Therapy*. At the end of 5 volumes the journal is steadily approaching normal punctuality in its publication. I am sure this will not be lost on our prospective publishers as well as our past and present subscribers, and as Editor-in-Chief I pledge to continue the drive for a steady continued improvement.

One of the most important factors in this improvement is the May 1994 meeting in Spain, 'New Frontiers in *Laser Therapy: Laser Barcelona 1994*'. As has been said before, there have been up till now two societies with a declared interest in laser therapy: the International Laser Therapy Association (ILTA), now under the Presidency of Dr Mary Dyson of Guy's Hospital, London, UK; and the International Society for Laser Applications in Medicine (ISLAM), under the Presidency of Professor Giovanni Galletti, University of Bologna, Italy. The ILTA is completely dedicated to all aspects of laser therapy and photobioactivation research, while the ISLAM incorporates other aspects of the medical applications of laser in addition to LLLT-related subject areas. There has thus naturally been an area in which the two associations have mutual interests, and this has led to fragmentation of the available human and research resources, which is fatal in a new medical field such as LLLT, as succinctly stated by ILTA President Dr Dyson in her 'Open Letter', summing up the main resolution of the *Laser London 1992* ILTA General

Assembly (*Laser Therapy*, 4: 99–100). In her letter, Dr Dyson outlined the steps which were required to bring an end to the schism in LLLT clinical practice and research, which steps were distilled into the single aim of eventual fusion of the two associations. In order to facilitate that fusion, a joint meeting was planned, and a Fusion Task Force was proposed. Both of those have now become reality, and the Fusion Task Force met in Cambrils, Spain in December of 1992, with representatives of the Executive Committees of both the ILTA and the ISLAM. The result was the agreement to hold a joint meeting in Barcelona in 1994, and that has now been set for 5–7 May. Announcements are imminent (see the Meetings Calendar at the back of this issue for information). At the General Assembly of that joint ILTA/ISLAM meeting, fusion of the two Societies will be formally proposed and implemented, and the proposed *World Association for Laser Therapy* (WALT) will be formed. The Fusion Task Force has already agreed on a proposed set of Articles of Association and Bylaws which will be presented to the Assembly for approval. The Task Force was unanimous in proposing that *Laser Therapy* be put forward as the official journal of the WALT, and this above all else will mean a breath of new life and increased vigour for our journal, which should also help us in our search for the next publisher.

I would like to finish off, then, by thanking all contributors to the past 5 volumes of *Laser Therapy*, with encouragement to take up your pens (or word processors) and write even more! Although the timing of publication of the journal suffered from irregular paper flow, *Laser Therapy* never appeared with papers below the standards set by the Editorial team, and it never appeared in any shape or form below the very high standards set by our first publishers, John Wiley & Sons. We remain firmly committed to the precepts of solid peer review on which the success of the journal has been founded. I think we can all be justifiably proud of all that has been achieved over the past 5 volumes.

So, as we come to the end of 1993, may I wish the editorial and production staff of *Laser Therapy* (both in Chichester, UK and Tokyo, Japan), and to all our readers, the compliments of the season, and my very best wishes for 1994. Let's go forward together in the new spirit of clinical and scientific cooperation which will be exemplified by the May Barcelona meeting, and hopefully our new publishers. I sincerely hope I will be able to write my next editorial, the first for the new volume, in the same spirit with our publishing house fixed, and the future of *Laser Therapy* secure!

Toshio Ohshiro
Editor-in-Chief