

Science meets public

Being a scientist is not just a job to earn a living but a hard profession that can be a wonderfully satisfying experience. Certainly, the pay could be better but those practicing science engage in it for a multitude of other than materialistic reasons. Working on the cutting edge of research and on the boundaries of the expansion of knowledge is a privilege and luxury in its own right. Society and the tax payer in general contribute to the funding of making science and it lies in the right of every layman to get an understanding, at least in part, of what we do as well as to be able to conceptualize our discoveries and not perceive science as an impenetrable, beyond comprehension mystery. People should know why tax money goes into paying for science. The problem, however, is that we do not share the same vocabulary and in essence speak different languages. How can a scientist convey easy to grasp information to the public at large, when most scientific disciplines have developed their own very highly specialized language? And interestingly, this quagmire is not just restricted to laymen, for if one takes a look at the biomedical field, the communication between one discipline and the other is in itself becoming ever more demanding. So how can we communicate science or make it more accessible to the public, if in many cases, researchers themselves are already experiencing problems understanding each other?

'*Science meets public*' is a new initiative with the aim of communicating relevant and valuable scientific information and knowledge to the curious and interested individual. This undertaking encompasses various modules such as communication and reputation management, several Internet platforms as well as an international media network (for more information see <http://www.sciencemeetspublic.de>).

In the present issue of *Addiction Biology*, we present a new feature of the initiative 'Science meets public': comic strips. Scientific cartoons are elements of many scientific journals and often used in oral presentations and newspapers. However, to our best knowledge, professional colored comic strips have so far not been used in scientific journals for the illustration of a method or the like. On pages 2–38 one can see that Sanchis-Segura and Spanagel use professional comic strips to illustrate and explain, in the simplest manner, complicated behavioral methods and paradigms. With the help of 'science meets public', a famous comic illustrator—Walter Hollenstein from Switzerland—joined this endeavor. Obviously, we are aware that comic strips in scientific journals are a bit of a novelty, not having been conceivable some years ago, probably anathema to most researchers taking their work too seriously. However, times change and evolve and so does science and its outlook on the world and similarly, the way the world perceives us. Thus, we hope that our readers will appreciate this new initiative, which may perhaps act as an inspiration to likewise embark on novel ideas in the realm of scientific communication. If most of us scientists could convey our research in easy to be understood 'language', obviously not necessarily in the form of a comic strip, the world would have a chance to understand us better.

We are also delighted to announce our new alliance with Blackwell Publishing. Our new publisher has a particular strength in the neuroscience and addiction fields, has excellent marketing ability and rapid online service. We look forward to a promising collaboration with Blackwell.

RAINER SPANAGEL *Editor-in-Chief*