

## It's hello from her and goodbye from him

*Lisa Cambridge and Rob Siebers*

### **LISA**

Hello! In this issue I find myself contemplating on those very large shoes I need to fill after Assoc. Prof. Rob Siebers' imminent departure. He has been a principle member of the Journal for many years and his contribution, advocacy and tenacity have been key to this Journal's success and is reflected in the Journal's readership and in the number of citations reported in this issue (1).

I share Rob's enthusiasm to help members achieve that very first publication and it is really what enticed me to this Journal. I am keen to continue this support for those outside the realms of academia and who have few opportunities to publish their work in a scientific peer-reviewed journal, and who contribute their experience and practical knowledge and improve healthcare at its grass-roots.

Writing and editing have been constant throughout my career and the tools I now apply to the Journal come from working in research and diagnostic sciences. I enjoy helping people communicate through writing but with my scientist's brain I always advocate for the delivery of solid evidence, clear research and well supported arguments. It seemed a natural step to move into a role as Editor and in the last 12 months with thanks to Rob, Michael Legge, the editorial team and Sharon Tozer I have learnt a lot and already identified some of my own guidelines for the road ahead:

- Be prepared for manuscripts to arrive in any state of completion, from minor proofreading to large meandering essays.
- Peer reviewers are gold and just as hard to find.
- There is so much out there you don't know that you don't know.
- No one is an expert on everything, ask for help.
- Authors do not read journal instructions.
- Show consistency in style, language, abbreviations, and terminology.
- Check for plagiarism, predatory journals, ethics, and author consent.
- Offer regular and respectful communication with authors and reviewers.

It is exciting times! The decision for its open access some years ago puts the Journal in a position to successfully navigate the constantly changing trends in the way we learn and our appetite for online information that is driving the future direction of scientific publishing.

Numerous technical advances and perspectives in laboratory medicine (2) will also be sure to feature, with more Artificial Intelligence (AI), Point-of-Care testing, automation, green technologies, new methods of testing and detection of disease.

The Medical Laboratory Science profession increased its profile in New Zealand and across the world during the Covid-19 pandemic and will do so again as New Zealand prepares for significant changes in the health and disability system. With the release of this July issue, Health NZ replaces the 20 District Health Boards and take responsibility for the day-to-day running of our health system together with the newly created Māori Health Authority who will work with Health NZ and the Ministry to ensure the reformed health system delivers improved outcomes for Māori (3).

As I look forward to these challenges ahead, I would like to thank you all for the warm welcome I have received and join with me in wishing Rob the very best and in thanking him for the massive contributions he has made to the Journal and to the profession.

### **ROB**

In 1993 an icon of our profession and friend of mine, Jim le Grice, tragically passed away in a mountain climbing accident. While attending his funeral I was approached by the then NZIMLS President, Dennis Reilly, and offered the position of Editor as Marie Gillies, then Editor, had indicated to the NZIMLS Council that she wished to stand down from that position. Apparently, my name was suggested as I had published several papers in the Journal, and it was assumed I would know what editing a journal was all about. This could not have been further from the truth as I quickly became aware of. Over the years we have had to deal with editorial issues such as plagiarism, ghost authorship, author disputes, and attracting suitable reviewers, among others. Just being an established author does not prepare an Editor for such issues.

My first issue as Editor was in May 1994. I was aware that previous Editors had struggled at times to attract papers, and this was also my experience. Despite attending numerous SIG and other scientific NZIMLS meetings urging presenters to submit, it was hard work attracting papers and we would often end up with only a few papers for an issue. This was an issue for the Journal questionnaire, which was started in 2007. The questionnaire, comprising 10 questions, is derived from published articles in each journal issue and provides valuable CPD points for our practitioners.

Nearly 10 years ago I persuaded the NZIMLS Council to make the Journal platinum open access. This is a model where an organisation (NZIMLS) owns the journal but does not charge authors a publishing fee and the authors retain copyright of their published article under a Creative Commons Attribution License which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original authors and source are credited. This has resulted in an increase in articles submitted to the Journal, many from overseas. I have been criticised by some of our members who believe our Journal should remain focussed on New Zealand, as implied by our Journal's name. However, we believe our Journal's focus is on medical laboratory science and as long as the science is valid and conclusions are based on results, the country of origin is irrelevant. Since making the Journal truly international we have had a satisfactory increase in accepted articles without compromising quality and the Journal has an international reputation (4).

I particularly like case studies for the Journal as they highlight what medical laboratory science is all about and have written on how to write up a case study for the Journal (5). All articles submitted to the Journal undergo single blind peer review (where the identity of the reviewers is anonymous, but identity of the authors is known to the reviewers). To help our reviewers, many of whom are practicing medical laboratory personnel without reviewing experience, we have also published guidelines for reviewers as an aid (6).

A few years ago, we called for expressions of interest to take over as Editor once I relinquished the role. Lisa Cambridge from Dunedin expressed an interest and joined the editorial team as a Deputy Editor from the April 2021 issue onward. Under tutelage and support from myself and Michael Legge (the other Deputy Editor), Lisa quickly mastered all aspects of what the position entailed. She will take over the baton as Editor at the AGM of the NZIMLS early September this year. I have no doubt she will be an excellent Editor and hope the members of our profession will give her all their support, be it as an Editorial Board member, author, or reviewer when requested, and wish her well in her new role.

Finally, my heartfelt thanks go to present and past NZIMLS Councils, Sharon Tozer (and Fran van Til in the past) in the

Executive Office, and the Editorial Board members during the last 28 years. It's a role I have thoroughly enjoyed, and my biggest thrill always has been helping a member of our profession here in New Zealand achieve their very first publication in the Journal. So, it is goodbye from me and a warm hello from her.

### **AUTHOR INFORMATION**

Lisa Cambridge, NZCS DipQA BAppManagement MNZIMLS, Deputy Editor  
Rob Siebers, PGCertPH FNZIMLS FRSB HonFNZAP, Editor

New Zealand Institute of Medical Laboratory Science, Rangiora

**Correspondence:** Lisa Cambridge.  
Email: editor@nzimls.org.nz



Lisa Cambridge



Rob Siebers

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